University of Alberta

Who's on Stage?
Performative Disclosure in Hannah Arendt's Account of Political Action

by

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

Hannah Arendt argues that political action is only meaningful through the disclosure of *who* the actor uniquely is, and that this disclosure is the basis of human dignity. Arendt's notion of performative disclosure helps us to rethink the individuated actor, not as a sovereign and self-transparent subject whose action expresses an authentic individual essence or constative *what*, but rather as a decentered and ecstatic *who* whose action reveals meaningful dimensions of the *world* and of the actor's unique situation in history, through the performance of acts and speech before public spectators. The idea that no actor can stand in a position of control with respect to his life story extends to a critical displacement of the notion of freedom understood as sovereignty and of political projects that attempt to *make* history. Action, as *praxis* and not *poiesis*, is best understood through Arendt's metaphor of performance, rather than productive art.

There are new interpretive possibilities for Arendt's theory of action, especially if we trace appearances of the ancient Greek *daimon* in Arendt's publications and lecture notes, and among works that Arendt confronted: Plato's Socratic dialogues and the myth of Er, Heidegger's notion of *aletheia* as Dasein's disclosure of Being, Jaspers' *valid personality*, and Kant's notion of aesthetic *genius*. The *daimon* implies that the public realm is a spiritual realm, that action is a form of connection to the divine, and that the actor is a decentered discloser of transcendent meanings and new possibilities within the *world*. The *daimon* also shows moral deliberation to be more vital to meaningful action than Arendt

suggests prior to *The Life of the Mind*, so that the distinctions usually read in Arendt between actor and spectator, as well as those between acting, thinking, and judging, may be productively occluded.

Arendt's struggle to re-invigorate action's disclosive capacity is at the center of her entire project. It sheds light on her critique of the world-alienating aspects of Marx, her insistent protection of a distinct political sphere from the private and the social spheres, and her rejection of Hegel's philosophy of history in favor of a fragmentary historiography inspired by Kafka and Benjamin.

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Introduction

Hannah Arendt made some of the twentieth century's most important contributions to political theory. Arendt's critical spectatorship of political phenomena extends to many arenas, and relates both to events of her time and to events and authoritative texts of previous ages. Arendt explored the social, economic, and political situations and experiences of European Jews in *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, and "Part One: Antisemitism," of *The Origins of Totalitarianism.* In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt also uncovered the constitutive factors and unprecedented appearance of modern totalitarian movements, totalitarian rule, and totalitarian logic. She studied the phenomena of modern revolution, political violence, constitution founding, and spontaneous political organization in *On Revolution*, *On Violence*, and *Crises of the Republic*. In many of these works, Arendt explored the concept of citizenship and the need for publicly recognized human rights for the exercise of freedom. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt explored the human faculties of labor, work, and action, as well as the modern practices, ideas, technological achievements, and political subjectivities that have shifted perceptions over the relative value and proper place of these faculties within public and private spaces. In *The Human Condition*, *On Revolution*, and *Between Past and Future*, Arendt proposed an account of freedom as performative political action, the appearance of words and deeds, in the company of others, which disrupt processes and reveal new possibilities of being and acting in the world. In certain essays of *Between Past and Future* and in *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt focused her attention to the faculties of the mind: thinking, willing, and judging. These works also examined how political action is remembered, how its meaning is retrospectively judged, how the existential and political perspective of the spectator understands the historical meaning and purpose projected by the actor.

Numerous subsequent critical analyses have appeared in all of these areas, producing a significant international body of Arendtian scholarship. Arendt was read relatively widely in the United States during her lifetime, not only during the controversy in Jewish leadership circles following *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, but also to inspire and understand direct political action during the Civil Rights Movement and to help understand a set of complex political situations facing America, including the nuclear arms race, the Vietnam War, and issues of racial desegregation. While Arendt's theoretical separation of the political realm from the realms of the economic and the social was considered fruitful in some circles, including French scholars hoping to re-articulate the uniqueness of a properly political realm of activity, it was heavily criticized by numerous others as leaving a vacuous notion of the political, devoid of an adequate notion of justice or of the material conditions of freedom. Such critiques have been offered by Martin Jay, Richard Bernstein, Hanna Pitkin, Albrecht Wellmer, Sheldon Wolin, Mildred Bakan, and Bhikhu Parekh, among others.

The first book length study of Arendt, published during her lifetime, was written by Margaret Canovan and appeared in 1974. In this book, and in a reinterpretation published almost twenty years later, Canovan insists on Arendt's critique of totalitarianism as the fundamental thread guiding all of her subsequent work. A wide-ranging collaborative volume appeared in 1979: *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, edited by Melvyn Hill for St. Martin's Press. Other book-length interpretations appeared in the 1980s, including those by George Kateb and Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves. In 1982, an increased interest in the career and personal life of Hannah Arendt was set off by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's thorough biography. 1982 also saw the publication of Arendt's lectures on Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment, what would have been the basis for the final tome of *The Life of the Mind*, along with Ronald Beiner's interpretive essay. Numerous collaborative volumes, journal articles, and books were published on Arendt in the 1990s, including those written or edited by Seyla Benhabib, Dana Villa, Kimberley Curtis, Lisa Disch, Bonnie Honig, Jacques Taminiaux, and Hanna Pitkin. In 1994, Arendt's earliest essays, written between 1930-1954, were translated and appeared as *Essays in Understanding*. Since 2000, Cambridge has published its *Companion to Hannah Arendt*, Julia Kristeva and Mary Dietz have contributed excellent book-length interpretations of her work, and yet more insightful collaborations and journal articles have appeared, including works referred to herein by Susannah Gottlieb and Patchen Markell. Arendt's correspondences with Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, and Mary McCarthy have recently been published. More of the lecture notes within the Hannah Arendt Archives, kept physically at the Library of Congress and digitally at the New School for Social Research, have been edited and published under the supervision of Jerome Kohn. Interest in Arendt was even further sparked by a series of international conferences in 2006, commemorating the centenary of her birth.

Arendt's work has inspired very different projects of other noteworthy scholars. Her accounts of political action, speech, and the intersubjective constitution of political power, along with her separation of disclosive *praxis* from instrumental *poiesis*, are cited by Jürgen Habermas as a source for his own theory of communicative action. In *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, Seyla Benhabib further expounds on Arendt's account of public space, one she sees as fruitful for the development of a regulative discursive ethic for the articulation of political interests and for political judgment within a self-governing democratic community. Arendt's account of action and public space, along with her insistence that political freedom depends on actual performative participation, have been mobilized by many theoreticians and practitioners of direct and radical democracy.

Arendt holds that one's identity is disclosed discursively and narratively, over the course of one's life, by acting in community with others. The self is an achievement that appears in public, in a shared space of appearance, and must be recognized by others. Some communitarian critiques of deontological liberalism's priority of right over good have read Arendt in a way that supports their own project. By this reading, the self's identity appears publicly by participating in a community's sense of shared purpose, according to a shared destiny, or bearing a shared history. Associated to this reading is an interpretation of Arendt's theory of action as deliberative speech within a political community.

In the hands of some interpreters, action becomes a community's way of identifying its most important ends, a way of expressing itself as a community. However, while Arendt does insist on action's intersubjective character, and on the actor's self-disclosure as dependant upon its being judged by a community of spectators, the communitarian adoption of Arendt depends on a misreading at two levels.

First, Arendt distinguishes between *who* and *what* a political actor is. While the *who* is the unique, irreplaceable individual, the *what* is the constative collection of characteristics or categories that the actor shares with others. It is the *who*, not the *what*, that is disclosed in action, according to Arendt. To define one's public identity only by the community of *what*s to which the actor belongs is to conceal the *who*. A communitarian reading of Arendt that would assimilate her work to a definition of action as the political expression of a community's shared interests or essence entirely misses this fundamental distinction. We shall see in chapter four, a chapter on Arendt's development of a theory of judgment in response to Kant, that the most important community for Arendt is the community of judging spectators, a community based on the judgment of shared political experiences and events, rather than shared personal traits. Some of the most interesting work inspired by Arendt has been in the area of identity politics, and feminist theory in particular, which places Arendt's distinction between *who* and *what* at the center of its analysis. We will visit some of these critiques in chapters one and three.

Second, both the discourse ethics readings and communitarian readings underestimate the degree to which Arendt's project is concerned with conceiving political action as separate from teleological determinations. Dana Villa, among others, reads Arendt's notion of action, and the actor's appearance before others, as containing its own end. Villa also emphasizes the Heideggerian, rather than Aristotelian, influence in Arendt. In fact, the influence of German existentialism and phenomenology was decisive throughout Arendt's career, as Arendt developed her own mode of political analysis in conversation with two of her early teachers: Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers. However, to read Arendt as *either* an existentialist *or* an Aristotelian is also to do violence to her work, for Heidegger's main theoretical influence on Arendt was mediated precisely by his own interpretation of Aristotle, while Jaspers' influence carried with it the teachings of Kant. As we shall see in chapter two, Arendt's notion of disclosive action is developed subsequent to lectures she attended at which Heidegger offered his own reading of Aristotle's account of disclosive, phronetic *praxis*.

One might wonder if, with the plethora of publications on Arendt, there is room or need for another Arendtian study. I suggest that there is, for three reasons.

First, there is still a significant body of unpublished material in the Arendt Archives that would be valuable to uncover, to bring even more depth and complexity to Arendtian scholarship. The most valuable material consists of lecture notes that Arendt delivered within the context of her teaching responsibilities at various American universities, including the New School for

Social Research, Columbia, University of Chicago, Berkeley, Wesleyan University, and Cornell. Arendt put much thought into these notes, as they were usually the starting point of reflections for future publications. They are, as such, pertinent source material for understanding the intricacies behind arguments and concepts that appear in Arendt's published works. A significant part of this study relies on these notes and, in doing so, brings to light previously untreated Arendtian reflections.

Secondly, there is a fundamental thesis offered by Arendt that has not yet received adequate attention in the existing literature, as to its theoretical influences, its complex implications, and its contradictions. It is that political action discloses *who* the actor is, as it discloses the *world* that the actor lives in. New understandings can be reached in many areas of Arendtian investigation by keeping a focus on the implications of this thesis as a guiding thread. So, in all five chapters of this study, we begin from the concept of action's disclosure of the *who* and of the *world*. This is not to say that Arendt's notion of the *who* has never been studied before, or that Arendt fails to offer, in published works, any notion of what the disclosure of the *who* or of the *world* entails. However, it has never been placed as the illuminating centre of a study of Arendt, and there is still much mystery around its thesis, many tensions that have not yet been properly addressed.

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt holds that action is only meaningful through the disclosure of *who* the actor uniquely is, a form of revealing that she posits as the basis of human dignity. It is my contention that Arendt's notion of disclosure helps us to rethink the individuated actor, not as a sovereign and self-transparent subject whose action expresses an authentic individual essence or constative *what*, but rather as a decentered and ecstatic *who* whose action, in plurality with others, reveals meaningful dimensions of the shared world and of the agent's unique situation in history, through the performance of acts and speech before public spectators. Following the Machiavellian notions of *virtu* and *fortuna*, we may read Arendt's notion of the *who* as disclosed in the dynamic between the actor's unique deeds and speech and the objective world conditions (political, temporal, spatial) that he[1] responds to. The idea that no actor can stand in a position of sovereign control with respect to his life story, that no one can *make* his story, extends to a critical displacement of the notion of freedom understood as sovereignty, as well as a critique of political projects that attempt to realize history. Arendt sees both of these phenomena as residing at the heart of totalitarian movements and as stultifying plurality. Arendt distances her notion of action's disclosure of the *who* from dialectical *work* models of the subject's self expression, self realization, or self assertion through work on natural material or within social relations. Arendt's notion of disclosure requires the actor's performative interaction with equal others and its recognition by spectators. This model avoids relations of domination and aims to keep the pluralistic public space of intersubjective appearances alive and well. Action is not seen as an expression of a pre-given internal essence, present-at-hand, but rather as a phenomenon of discovery of the world, of others, and of who one is, understood in terms of one's performative response to one's changing situation. Action, as *praxis* and not *poiesis*, is thus better understood from the perspective of Arendt's metaphor of performance art, rather than by the alternative metaphor of productive art that dominates the Western tradition.

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[1] Actors and spectators include both females and males. In this thesis, however, I use masculine pronouns to designate the generic or universal, and 'man' to refer to the human being in general. This is in accordance with the common usage of Arendt and several other writers treated herein.

My second main argument is that by tracing the appearances of the *daimon* figure in Arendt's published work, lecture notes, and in the work of her most important theoretical influences, we may come to a rather new reading of Arendt's notion of the *who* disclosed in action. The ancient Greek *daimon* is a figure that emerges in Arendt's own texts and lectures, but also in Plato's Socratic dialogues and the myth of Er, as well as in thinkers with whom Arendt engaged in developing her account of action and judgment – particularly in Heidegger's notion of *aletheia* as Dasein's disclosure of Being, Jaspers' *valid personality*, and Kant's notion of *genius*. Understanding the *who* in light of the *daimon* figure problematizes the distinction usually read in Arendt between the political space of appearance and another spiritual, transcendent, or divine realm, inconsequential to politics. Following Arendt's clear rejection of a two-world metaphysics that would separate a realm of true, a-temporal, Being from its derivative or lesser phenomenal appearances, Arendt has been read as offering a post-metaphysical reading of the engendering of meaning in the public realm. Some readings interpret her account of political action as altogether removed from questions of the actor's spiritual disposition or his relationship to transcendence in general. But transcendence is central to Arendtian action, as Michael Gendre and others have shown. It is my contention that the *daimon* figure illuminates an underdeveloped interpretive possibility for Arendt's account of action: that action is a form of connection to the divine, not only by inciting spectator narratives that might serve to guarantee the actor a measure of earthly immortality, but in that it engages the actor as a decentered discloser of transcendent meanings and new possibilities within the world. It is also divine in that it engages the duality of the thinking activity, an activity that deliberates, plays, reckons, and struggles with concepts that appear, uncannily, to come both from inside and from outside of the thinker. That the public realm is a spiritual realm means that it is the space in which the transcendent Being of worldly phenomena may be disclosed, the meanings in excess of appearances, but in a way that requires the symbolic and representative order of *doxa*, not wordless and motionless noetic seeing, in an active and continual interpretive expansion of spectator judgments.

The *daimon* also implies that action performs, or publicizes, the *who* of the actor as a *valid personality* that appears as a singular persona in public, while preserving alterity within and outside of the actor. Alterity within the actor is marked by the two-in-one of conscience, which is the internal, anticipatory representation of the plurality of spectators who will judge the appearing act. Actual spectators are the second order of alterity. This reading problematizes some of Arendt's most famous theoretical distinctions, such as that between what the actor makes appear through action, and what the actor thinks or intends, prior to action. However, Arendt obscures these distinctions herself. References to the *daimon*, read along with the Socratic dialogues, show that moral deliberation, the internal conversation of the two-in-one of thought, is more closely bound up in with public disclosure of the *who* than Arendt suggests in published texts prior to *The Life of the Mind*. Arendt also occludes these distinctions in her account of reflective judgment, inspired by Kant, when the figures of the actor and spectator are seen to reside in the same individual, when we see that to discursively render one's judgment as a response to an event is itself a form of action. Kant describes the *daimon* as the spirit that inspires the actor, but which must be tamed in order to be made intelligible to an audience of spectators that the actor anticipates. Thus, the imagined prospective spectator is immanent to the deliberation of the two-in-one of thinking, prior to action, while a public theatre of spectators is required for the deliberation of the two-in-one to be performed and to appear as the *valid personality*.

The third reason that there is need for yet another Arendt study is that the current political situation offers a set of problems to which Arendtian considerations of action and the disclosure of the *who* are entirely pertinent. Applied to the many debates surrounding identity politics, the disclosure of the *who*, as opposed to the *what*, disturbs reified public identities so that one's action within a group does not define the meaning of the actor's story once and for all, based on the spectator's pre-conceived notions of the group's essence or shared interests. Rather, public identities serve as shifting foci of discursive exchange through which the personal *who* of each actor, the way by which the actor lives his *whats*, may shine through. We can gain from research that reflects on the basis of identities, how these are formed and recognized publicly, what degree of autonomy actors maintain in their own identity formation, what the relation is between public identity and personal self-understanding. These are all pertinent questions for contemporary democratic theory, many of which are implicated in the perpetual debate over the appropriate dividing line between the public and private spheres.

The spaces for authentic citizen political engagement and critique of the normalizing discourses of governments and corporations is under continuous threat. Arendt provides a useful articulation of the implications of this threat and rethinks freedom as realized only in engagement in the public world, through continual performance among others, and in the affirmation of new possibilities. Because the disclosure of the *who* is also the disclosure of the *world*, action serves to reveal dimensions of its contextualizing situation, while challenging discourses that conceal a wider understanding of this situation. Arendt's account of disclosive action as performance further serves as the basis of her account of the necessary political conditions for such disclosure. These conditions would include a stable, yet augmentable constitution that provides for the free exchange of public opinion, a condition reflected in Arendt's image of a lasting theatre in which actors and spectators meet, an image that reveals the ultimate interdependence between actor and *homo faber*.

Finally, Arendt holds that the recognition of the *who* and the public judgment over the meaning of action relies on retrospective narrative. Arendt sees a redeeming power to narrative and perceives the political theorist as a sort of storyteller. In questioning to what extent meaningful stories can be told about actors and their struggles in a manner that engages reflective rather than determinate judgment, and avoids the teleology of modern progress narratives, we may rethink how we read our collective past and perceive the meanings of our own actions as citizens. This affects not only our subjective sense of self, but can also affect the policy of whole political communities.

Chapter Synopses

Both main theses presented above are treated in chapter one. The chapter begins by distinguishing the political metaphors of productive and performance art and by illuminating the fundamental features of disclosive action as a performative response, as the actualization of natality, and as situated by plurality. We then examine Arendt's thesis that action is inspired by principles made public only as long as performance lasts. We identify a divide between disclosive action as self-presentation, an achievement of virtuosity that is stylized and willed, versus the actor's lack of control over the spectator's perception and judgment of *who* he discloses. We then differentiate between the *who* and the *what*, highlighting that the disclosure of the *who* raises action above utility, if undertaken in a spirit of disinterested togetherness. We proceed by examining the role of the spectator who retrospectively identifies the *who* within a coherent narrative, in a series of stages of reifications of the act's initial living appearance. Here, the importance of a stable and renewed space of appearance is explored through the metaphor of the theatre. We introduce the theatrical figure of the masked *persona*, one central to Arendt's defense of public and legal personhood, taken up again in chapter three. Next, we uncover a tension between the standards of greatness required for the foundation and subsequent augmentation of the public space, an important tension in Arendt's distinction between making and acting, and one stemming from her reception of Machiavellian state theory. To conclude the first chapter, we discover some appearances of the *daimon* and note this guiding spirit's close relation to the two-in-one of conscience and to the performance of thought in boundary situations as a *valid personality*.

Arendt writes that human beings show their *humanitas* in their choice of company. Accordingly, Arendt develops her reflections on political action in conversation with her own chosen company. The final four chapters of this study are organized with this in mind, each focused on the study of action's disclosure of the *who* and of the *world*, yet expanding to broader areas of Arendt's work and analyzing Arendt's conversations with key figures of the Western tradition of political philosophy. These four chapters expand on my two main theses.

Chapter two explores Karl Jaspers' and Martin Heidegger's important influence on Arendt. To better understand boundary or limit situations, a concept borrowed from Karl Jaspers, we begin by revisiting Jaspers' own account of such situations. We then move to Heidegger. It was through Heidegger's Marburg lectures that a young Arendt first reflected on the distinction between *who* and *what*, as well as the disclosive power of *praxis*. First, we study how Heidegger's critique of traditional ontology and his depiction of Dasein's disclosive relation to Being marks Arendt's conception of action in non-teleological terms, and the disclosure of the *who* as a decentered phenomenon in which the *world* is also disclosed. The central notion that Heidegger recasts here is that of *aletheia*, the primordial Greek concept of truth as *unconcealment*, one that displaces the understanding of the relation between Dasein and Being. We proceed to show the connection between *aletheia* and Heidegger's particular understanding of freedom as an openness to Being, a notion of freedom that influences Arendt's own definition of freedom as performance within a shared world, rather than as a sovereign disposition of the will. We then revisit Heidegger's Marburg lectures on the Aristotelian modes of *aletheia*, or intellectual virtues, with special attention to the difference between *techne* and *phronesis*, the respective modes of disclosure of *poiesis* and *praxis*. In these lectures we find the basis of the Arendtian notion that action discloses the *who*, as its *arche*, for its own sake and through its own performance, a performance that discloses conditions of the situation to which it responds. Next, we explore Heidegger's and Arendt's drawing of the world-alienating consequences of positing the solitary and self-transparent "I" as the ground of Being and the center of ontology and epistemology. Both see this move as reflecting the desire for security and for control of the world, in response to a *resentment* towards the groundless, contingent, and finite aspects of human experience. In this section we study the notion of Dasein's essence as existence, the performance of acts and projection of possibilities within a contextualizing world of reference relations. Here we again draw the distinction between the *what* and the *who*. We then turn to Heidegger's account of authentic Dasein, which involves an answering to the self-calling of conscience and a projection of one's own possibilities of taking action, as a refusal of the mundane meanings and possibilities for existence perpetuated and limited by the *They*. While Arendt adopts certain aspects of Heidegger's account of authentic Dasein, she significantly transforms it to emphasize the natality of action, rather than its response to oncoming death, and to restore the dignity of *doxa* and of the human plurality that contextualizes political action. Finally, Arendt argues that the tradition's universalization of the fabrication logic of *poiesis* is incarnated in modernity as technical rationality, with its tendency to instrumentally schematize the world and thus alienate man from it. To conclude the chapter, we study Heidegger's critique of technological enframing as the primary modern mode of disclosure, one that turns man into a master of standing reserve, rather than a participant in the ecstatic revealing of Being.

Chapter three examines Arendt's critique of Karl Marx. Through her critical interpretation of Marx, Arendt suggests that action's disclosure of the *who* must be separate from the material, biological necessity of *animal laborans* and the instrumental logic of *homo faber*. Arendt argues that Marx's conception of *socialized humanity* has both reflected and further encouraged modern phenomena that have distorted the disclosure of the *who* and of the *world*. These phenomena include the *glorification of labor*, the *rise of the social*, and *world alienation*. Arendt's main critique of materialist philosophies, including Marx's, is that they overlook that even when humans are concerned with material interests, they disclose themselves as unique subjects through action and speech, so that this action and speech should not be relegated to the position of ideological superstructure, seen as functionally determined by social relations of production and material class interest. Arendt criticizes Marx for positing labor, rather than intersubjective action and speech, as the activity wherein man discloses his identity and experiences freedom. She holds that Marx's glorification of labor obfuscates the distinction between man's unending metabolism with nature and his world-constitutive work. It also encourages a harmonization of interests and of *doxa* that threatens the conditions of plurality required for the proper disclosure and judgment of the *who*, the individuation of actors and spectators beyond their nature as an exchangeable human specimen. Arendt charges Marx's stateless and classless image of socialized humanity as further engendering the "rise of the social," a blurring of the distinct realms of the private and of the political. In Marx's socialization of the accumulation process, private property is sacrificed for full productive cooperation, thus destroying the private space necessary for intimacy, for psychic care, and to give depth of meaning to an actor's rise into the public. Arendt is also critical of Marx's image of socialized humanity for its lack of protection and recognition of the legal rights of the citizen, as well as for its threat to a constitutionally protected public space in which public *personas* may appear and in which political communities based on action and depersonalized exchange of spectator opinion may emerge. While the meaning of the disclosure of the *who* must not be judged according to the logic of means and ends, the world-constitutive work of *homo faber* is nonetheless essential to create the in-between space that renders action intelligible. Arendt criticizes Marx for encouraging a phenomenon of world-alienation, wherein man meets himself as the only source of meaning and value, and where the preservation of cultural works and the disinterested judgment of their disclosive capacity is distorted by their shifting use values and exchange values. We then question the fairness of Arendt's criticism, since it has been charged that she underestimates the rational, world-constitutive, and self-disclosive dimensions of Marx's notion of labor. Since Arendt holds that the *who* cannot be disclosed even by world-constitutive work, let alone endless labor tied to necessity, we proceed by distinguishing Arendt's concept of disclosive action from Hegel and Marx's *work* model of freedom and self-actualization. In the final sections of the chapter, still with reference to Arendt's relation to Marx, we revisit Arendt's critique of the "social question" within modern revolutions and her identification of a properly political mentality. These sections serve to address the many critics who see in Arendt's distinction between freedom and necessity, a prioritization of political freedom at the cost of concerns for social justice and material equality. Many charge that Arendt presents a form of *praxis* that is vacuous, ignorant of class-based, gendered, and racialized determinations, and that consequently serves to legitimize injustices and narrow the horizon of the meaning of freedom. We answer some of these critics, guided by the premise that Arendt's distinction between public freedom and natural or material necessity is centered around the notion that it is the disclosure of the *who*, impossible in labor or work, that constitutes human dignity.

Chapter four revisits Arendt's creative adoption of Immanuel Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment as a model for political judgment. Arendt's theory of judgment serves as a model for a community of spectators to observe the phenomenal particularities of political events and political actors and to deliberate about their significance and meaning, without the guidance of absolute rational standards. The individual's responsibility to judge the unprecedented, without the guarantee of traditional ethical and legal categories, arises after the appearance of totalitarian rule, which dissolves the reliability of commonly held ethical standards, yet introduces horrific acts whose novelty must still somehow be accounted for by the judging spectator. The spectator arrives at a judgment informed both by the unmediated specificity of his initial taste in relation to the phenomenon, and by his having imagined the standpoints of all other spectators. This judgment is meant to serve as an ethical limitation to the free, agonistic action through which the *who* is disclosed to the spectator. In this context, we illuminate the similarities between the Kantian *genius* and the Arendtian *daimon* or *who*, whose originality are both rendered intelligible by the judgment of the spectator. As reflective judgment occurs according to a *sensus communis*, we proceed to question whether the purpose of a community of spectators is to reach rational consensus, to develop an *enlarged mentality* that is rationally informed, or whether the activity of intersubjective judgment is an end in itself. Finally, we ask to what extent the spectator and actor are existential moments within the same individual. This consideration leads to questioning to what extent an actor is capable of willing the meaning or ethical principle of his intended act, or to what extent it remains a matter out of his control. The distinction between spectator and actor becomes blurred, as we learn that the judging spectator is also capable of disclosing a *who*, while the actor is capable of anticipating his judging spectators.

Chapter five begins from the Kantian proposition that spectator judgment informed by the *sensus communis* will lead to the development of an *enlarged mentality* over time. Kant, a spectator of the French Revolution, thus introduces the modern progress narrative, one expounded upon by Hegel's universal history and progressive, dialectical, self-discovery of *Geist*. Here, we revisit Arendt's critique of progress narratives, her demonstration of their connection to totalitarian logic, and her own alternative fragmentary historiography. Arendt develops her own concept of the *who*'s relation to time and to history, in conversation with Franz Kafka and Walter Benjamin. Arendt suggests that the *who* constantly thinks and acts in a gap between past and future, can change certain processes through the power of natality in its acts, and can leave a story behind that discloses, in a narrative cosmos separate from grand progress narratives, certain truths about the world that housed his acts or certain unexpected human possibilities. This chapter questions whether a story that aims to disclose the *who* of its hero, or a story that means to redeem sufferers otherwise concealed by universal history, can succeed apart from any notion of historical teleology.

Chapter One:

Performative Disclosure of the *Who* and the Appearance of the *Daimon*

Arendt's account of the disclosure of the *who* and of the *world* is central to her theory of freedom and political action. Her notion of action's disclosure of a unique *who* posits the individuated actor, not as a sovereign and self-transparent subject whose action expresses an authentic individual essence, a *what,* but as a decentered and ecstatic *who* that, in plurality with others, reveals meaningful dimensions of the shared world and of one's unique situation in history. This disclosure occurs through the performance of acts and speech before others and is retrospectively judged and narratively reified in various forms of remembrance, by differently situated spectators.

This chapter begins by proposing that Arendt's concept of disclosure is best illuminated through her analysis of the political metaphor of performance art, as opposed to productive art, a distinction that recasts the ancient Greek division between *praxis* and *poiesis*. Keeping this distinction in mind, we proceed to elucidate the main features of Arendtian action. Near the end of the chapter, we begin to trace the appearances of the Greek *daimon* figure, both in Arendt's published work and unpublished lectures, as well as in texts by thinkers who influenced Arendt. The figure of the *daimon* sheds new light on Arendt's concept of the *who* and helps to re-conceptualize the public realm as a spiritual one. Arendt has been read as offering a post-metaphysical reading of the engendering of meaning in the public realm, a phenomenal account of political action removed from questions of the actor's relationship to the divine. However, her periodic references to the *daimon* show that Arendt's notion of disclosive action is, indeed, bound to notions of the divine, the spiritual, and the transcendent, making the *who* or the political actor a conduit for the revealing of aspects of Being. These references also show that moral deliberation, the internal conversation of the two-in-one of thought, is more closely bound up with public disclosure of the *who* than Arendt suggests in published texts before *The Life of the Mind*. In what follows, I attempt to reveal these ties by more deeply exploring the figure of the *daimon*, not only as it appears in Arendt's texts and lectures, but also as it appears in Plato's Socratic dialogues and the myth of Er, as well as in Karl Jaspers' notion of the *valid personality*. In subsequent chapters, the *daimon* will re-emerge in Heidegger's notion of Dasein's disclosure of Being, as well as in Kant's notion of *genius*.

Politics as Making

While both productive and performance art have served as metaphors for politics, Arendt argues that the tradition of Western thought generally favors the fabrication model and universalizes the instrumental logic of *poiesis*. The experience of *poiesis,* as fabrication or productive art, is fundamental to the conceptual beginnings of the philosophical tradition, particularly through Plato's drawing of examples from the field of *making*. In *The Human Condition* and "What Is Freedom?" from *Between Past and Future*, Arendt posits that the result of the Platonic analogy between politics and making, as well as the tradition of political thought that it shapes right up until Marx, represents a loss of the essence of politics, which Arendt understands as the freedom of spontaneous action, the beginning of new processes and human relationships, and the public appearance of great deeds and words in which the *who*s of actors, and the *world* in which they act, are revealed.

There are many aspects of fabrication and productive art that are analogous to the philosophical tradition's understanding of politics, as read by Arendt. Productive arts, generally speaking, begin with an ideal image of what the final product is to look like, an imagined form that the artist refers to before, during, and after the work process. It is in relation to this model that the final product is made and subsequently judged.[1] Likewise, in Plato, Arendt sees the philosopher's escape from the contingent and uncertain realm of human affairs – the realm of the cave – to the eternal, illuminating realm of *eidos*, and then an application of these forms back to the earthly realm of politics, as measures and standards for behavior, and the basis for the sovereign rule of communities. Arendt suggests that the Socratic school, including Plato and Aristotle, take what were actually pre-political activities, legislation and the foundation of the city, and establish them as political. In the making of laws to normalize or improve human behavior according to rationally set measures, the political craftsman produces tangible results according to a recognizable end. The uncertainty and futility of action is replaced by the stability of making or producing according to a pre-conceived ideal. In his reading of Arendt, Dana Villa writes: "So long as political philosophy sees its task as the articulation of first principles with which actions, peoples, and institutions must be brought into accord, it reiterates the Platonic schema; moreover, it perpetuates the idea that politics is a plastic art."[2]

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[1] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 124.

The classic image of productive art implies a singular artist, one who directs and maintains control over the creative process from beginning to end: "*Homo faber* is indeed a lord and master, not only because he is the master or has set himself up as the master of all nature but because he is master of himself and his doings."[3] The modern philosophical equation of freedom with will or will-to-power manifests politically as an equation of freedom with sovereignty, which requires the self and others to submit to a sole sovereign will. Arendt writes that Plato separates human action into two moments: *archein* (to begin) and *prattein* (to achieve), and that Plato demands that he who begins an act also control the end or outcome, much like the master productive artist.[4] The ruler posits an end that the community ought to embody and then commands others, who carry out this sovereign command with little of their own initiative. This model of a ruling element that commands subordinate ones was carried by Plato from the Greek household and model for artistic mastery, and then applied to his image of the ideal city and even the imaginary of the human soul. This division between thinking and doing is basic, argues Arendt, to the social division of mental and physical labour between ruler and those who obey. Thus, politics is reduced to the relationship between the sovereign will and those who obey and carry out its commands.

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[2] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 246.
[3] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 126.
[4] Ibid., 199.

The logic of *poiesis* implies a positing of ends that organize and justify their means. All stages of the production process itself are undertaken as means to the end of the final product. Arendt argues that the *poiesis* model is contemporarily incarnated as technical rationality, with its tendency to instrumentally schematize the world as means to ends posited by a sovereign will. Man as the disposer or user of means, as self-willing *homo faber*, becomes the final measure of nature and things. No activity is seen as performed for its own sake, while utility becomes the very content of meaning. It was through her analysis of totalitarianism that Arendt first developed her critique of politics that reduce all meaningful activity to mere means. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt suggests that while activities enjoyed for their own sake tend to bring individuals together in their performance, as a shared interest, the atomization of the masses required for effective totalitarian rule could not allow for this. So, internal SS pamphlets and Himmler himself insisted that no task and no end exist for their own sake.[5]

Fabrication works on given material, which requires a certain level of violence or transformation to be made into a final piece of work.[6] Arendt sees the organizing of human and natural material as means to posited ends throughout the tradition of political thought. An understanding of politics in this light implies that violence, as necessary alteration, must be done to the laws of the city, the relationships of its people, and even aspects of the psyche, or soul, according to a notion of rational self-rule. The elements of the city, the talents or tendencies of its people, are treated by the ruler, conceived as a master craftsman, as the material through which the ideal city, constitution, or people is produced. Arendt writes that the traditional understanding of human affairs as a sphere of making, with its necessary violence to given material, is finally taken up by the imaginaries of modern political revolutions, with their proposition that a new body politic can be made, or that history can be made, through violence. The metaphor also appears in Arendt's critique of totalitarian ideology. Nazism can be seen as the fulfillment of the plastic art of the state, or as national aestheticism, the forming of the *volk* according to an ideal of the complete artwork. This complete work requires the alteration of raw material and the creation of a consistent product. Margaret Canovan suggests that when human beings are considered as raw material, the creation of a finished work requires the violent suppression of plurality and an aspiration to omnipotence. She notes, following Arendt, that one of the primary principles of totalitarian ideology is complete inner consistency, and consistency between ideology and worldly facts, which are perceived from the standpoint of the ideologue to be malleable. This inner consistency may be illustrated to subjects by the ruler, or political craftsman, through hyper-logical propaganda. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt describes the propaganda effect of infallibility:

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[5] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 322-323n.

[6] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 122.

> The propaganda effect of infallibility, the striking success of posing as a mere interpreting agent of predictable forces, has encouraged in totalitarian dictators the habit of announcing their political intentions in the form of prophecy. [...] [T]he liquidation is fitted into a historical process in which man only does or suffers what, according to immutable laws, is bound to happen anyway. As soon as the execution of the victims has been carried out, the "prophecy" becomes a retrospective alibi: nothing happened but what had already been predicted.[7]

One effect of the demand for inner consistency is that spontaneity is destroyed and human behavior is made predictable, molded according to a consistent totalizing ideology.[8] Arendt argues that "the coercive force of logicality"[9] springs from the Western philosophical tradition's foundational understanding of reason as non-contradiction. Arendt thus separates the notion of a free act from its rational, logical determination. She adds that while logical truths may be recognized and understood by *lonely* individuals, defined as those who have become deserted both by physical companions and by their own internal interlocutors, all forms of disclosure that rely on shared experience and dialogical thought are, in fact, concealed by forms of mental activity and forms of political rule that hypostatize such logic.[10]

Productive art leaves a finished work at the end of the process, one that becomes part of the world of things, and lasts without significant further work on the part of the artist or on the part of others. The creative process of making comes to an end with the completion of the product. Arendt is particularly careful to distinguish the essence of freedom and action from this aspect of the arts metaphor:

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[7] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 349

[8] Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation*, 25-27.

[9] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 472-73.

[10] Ibid., 476-77.

> [T]he metaphor becomes completely false if one falls into the common error of regarding the state or government as a work of art, as a kind of collective masterpiece. […] Political institutions, no matter how well or how badly designed, depend for continued existence upon acting men; their conservation is achieved by the same means that brought them into being. Independent existence marks the work of art as a product of making; utter dependence upon further acts to keep it in existence marks the state as a product of action.[11]

As we shall see further in our discussion of Arendt's reading of Machiavellian foundation and *virtu*, Arendt argues that freedom cannot be guaranteed merely by a well-founded constitution, but rather that freedom is the activity of continuous *augmentation* of this constitution, following its foundation.

Fabrication generally takes place behind closed doors, so that while the finished product appears to the public in the gallery, the artist himself, along with the creative process, need not appear in public: "Hence the element of freedom, certainly present in the creative arts, remains hidden; it is not the free creative process which finally appears and matters for the world, but the work of art itself, the end product of the process."[12] The *who* of the artist never publicly appears, and is never disclosed. One important implication of this aspect of the fabrication metaphor is that there is no publicly identifiable agent that can be consequently held publicly accountable. According to Arendt, this secrecy and anonymity is essential not only to totalitarian rule, but also to the de-politicization of decisions and events within mass consumer society, their appearance as products of anonymous and inevitable processes, exempt from criticism. Another reading of this aspect of the metaphor signifies that the activity of politics can be deferred, or represented, rather than actively performed oneself. The significance of politics, in this case, lies not in performative participation, but rather in achieving a final state of affairs.

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[11] Arendt, "What Is Freedom?" in *Between Past and Future*, 153.

[12] Ibid., 153-54.

Arendt argues that freedom requires that we renounce the sovereignty that characterizes politics understood according to the model of making. The equation of freedom to an attribute of the sovereign will, independent of others and prevailing against them, is one of the causes of the equation of power with oppression, or rule over others. Where men wish to be sovereign, as individuals or as organized groups, they must submit to the "oppression of the will," be this the individual will with which the subject determines his action, or the general will of an organized group.[13] Arendt holds that since a plurality of unique individuals lives on Earth, freedom and sovereignty are so little identical that they cannot even exist simultaneously. To illuminate her theory of non-sovereign freedom, Arendt appeals to an alternate metaphor from the world of art, that of performance.

Political Action as Performance

Arendt suggests the performing arts as a more fitting metaphor by which to understand freedom experienced through action. She recasts this metaphor from its original appearance in pre-Socratic Greek writers such as Thucydides and Homer, but also in certain moments of Aristotle in which he insists that *praxis* contains its own *telos*. In "What is Freedom?" Arendt writes: "[T]he Greeks always used such metaphors as flute-playing, dancing, healing, and seafaring to distinguish political from other activities, that is…they drew their analogies from those arts in which virtuosity of performance is decisive."[14]

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[13] Ibid., 161-65.

Here we examine the elements of Arendt's theory of non-sovereign freedom as political action, as it is illuminated through her performing arts metaphor, and particularly with regard to action's capacity to disclose the *who* of the actor, as well as the *world* in which action is performed. The preceding section on fabrication will be recalled not only to serve as a contrast for performative elements of action, but also because action's capacity to disclose the *who* and the *world*, both at the moment of disclosure and for historic remembrance, ultimately also depends on the reifying capacity of fabrication, the work of *homo faber*.

Arendt's notion of action implies the performance of great deeds and their accompaniment by great words. She holds that deeds without words fail to disclose the meaning of action and the *who* of the actor, and usually revert to wordless violence to attain their ends. On the other hand, words without deeds impoverish speech and relegate it to empty posturing and propaganda. This unity of deed and word is central to Arendt's notion of political power:

> Power is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities.[15]

If we understand what Arendt means by a great deed and great words, we come closer to understanding the complex notion of action. First, however, the context in which action occurs must be established. Arendt insists that action occurs in the context of plurality, which she posits as the essential condition of human life on Earth. Arendt writes that plurality has the twofold character of equality and distinction among human beings: "Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live."[16] Speaking metaphorically, every performer is unique in how they play, while every spectator experiences the performance from a different perspective and according to their own taste. Plurality is essential to Arendt's notion that individuation can occur through action, that a unique *who* can be disclosed in action and for history, and can consequently be held responsible for their actions. It is also important for the notion that each spectator, because they are unique, is responsible for their own judgment. The possibility of individuation, which depends on plurality, raises human life to a level of dignity over and above its existence as mere anonymous biological life.

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[14] Ibid., 153.
[15] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 178-79.

The condition of plurality also implies that a multitude of people with divergent wills and cross-purposes act in such a way that innumerable unique relationships are formed between them. The "web of human relationships" forms the "subjective in-between" of deeds and words that "overlays" the "objective in-between" of physical entities and interests.[17] This is the general context in which all deeds and words, as action, are performed.

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[16] Ibid., 10.
[17] Ibid., 162-63.

Perhaps the most important feature of action, along with its disclosure of the *who* and the *world*, is that it is the actualization of the human condition of *natality*.[18] According to Arendt, Augustine introduced freedom as natality, bringing something new into the existing world.[19] Arendt's own notion of action is similar to the Christian notion of the performance of miracles, in that it conceives great deeds and great words as doing the unexpected, breaking chains of events and natural, historical, or social processes in a way that discloses new aspects or possibilities of existence. Arendt suggests that such processes, if not interrupted, always tend toward ruin, decay, or death. Freedom always appears as an assertion against these processes.[20] Action constitutes a beginning, a unique starting point of unpredictable relationships that transcend the given. To begin, to perform the improbable, is for Arendt the principle of freedom, something that the actor can accomplish due to their uniqueness (according to the condition of plurality), and as a response to their initial birth into the world. Words and deeds are marked by natality because, like one's original physical birth, they insert the actor into the world. Through action, men "confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance."[21] Arendt holds that the impulse to initiate action that again inserts us into the world springs from the beginning that is our birth, our first arrival as newcomers: "Because they are *initium*, newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth, men take initiative, are prompted into action."[22]

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[18] Ibid., 158.
[19] Arendt, "What Is Freedom?" 167.
[20] Ibid., 168.
[21] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 157.
[22] Ibid.

There is an unpredictable and contingent aspect of beginning under conditions of plurality. Arendt holds that the consequences of beginnings are boundless:

> [A]ction, though it may proceed from nowhere, so to speak, acts into a medium where every reaction becomes a chain reaction and where every process is the cause of new processes. [...] [T]he smallest act in the most limited circumstances bears the seed of the same boundlessness, because one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation.[23]

Following the performance metaphor, the more improvisation, or the freer one is to play something new, unexpected, and unscripted, the greater the risk of dissonance between players. It is impossible for one beginner to fully control the outcome of his action, since action can create unpredictable relationships. When an actor inserts himself into the web of human relationships, through the beginning of a new process, its repercussions are felt within this pre-existing and contextualizing set of relations, the medium that provides the action with its reality and objectivity. It is from the multiple effects of actors on one another and with one another, that intelligible life narratives may emerge. According to Arendt's notion of the engendering of power, action is essentially undertaken in relation with others, not in isolation. While Arendt does insist on excellent individuals and the disclosure of unique *whos*, she also emphasizes the importance of political community. This community of actors is precisely what totalitarianism destroys in creating a mass of atomized individuals. But, Arendt insists that a political community rests on shared action and judgment, shared *inter-ests*, rather than on shared natural traits or other stable categories of identity. In this way, Arendt shows an affinity to Aristotle's notion of political friendship.

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[23] Ibid., 169-70.

Because the actor can never ultimately master all that occurs in the dynamic of the web into which his act is thrown, the act rarely achieves its preconceived purpose. Under conditions of plurality, he who sets action in motion through initiative, the actor as beginner following the Greek *archein* and the Latin *agere*, is not he who sees what he started through to its end, from a position of sovereignty. While the actor, as initiator of processes, is the subject and sufferer of his life story, he is not its author or producer, does not stand in relation to the outcome of his story as one who masters it.[24] This clearly contrasts the fabrication model. For Arendt, political power is not the capacity to command or rule, like the art maker, but rather to act in concert.

Under conditions of plurality, it is unlikely that the meaning of the new relationships and processes set off by action will be judged by those who witness them in the exact same way. As Villa notes, the meaning of action is never fully objectifiable.[25] Similarly, Julia Kristeva writes that Arendt sees birth as the "ultimate experience of renewable meaning."[26] The notion of renewable meaning through action must be understood against the backdrop of Arendt's diagnosis of the modern breakdown of the unity of tradition, authority, and religion, as well as against her account of twentieth century totalitarianism, genocide, and nuclear technology. These factors came to signal that "anything can be done" and that previous limits to human action, based on traditional morality and metaphysics, are no longer generally valid. Thus, Arendt's thought begins from the assumption of a breakdown of traditional meanings of action, traditional legitimating discourses by which to rule communities, and traditional ethics. Her work attempts to show how new processes and events can occur, how new bases for plural communities can be laid and augmented, how meaningful action can be regenerated. It also questions the conditions under which the meanings of action can be disclosed and judged. The notions of natality and renewable meaning are central to this project, one that Kristeva calls "a rare atheism that is devoid of nihilism."[27]

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[24] Ibid., 163-64.
[25] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 84.
[26] Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt*, 45.

A further feature of action, related directly to the performative metaphor, is that it shows the actor's *virtu*, in the Machiavellian sense of his attunement to past events and present conditions, which can be understood as aspects of *fortuna*, as opportunities that the world has revealed. In the preparatory notes of lectures that Arendt delivered on Machiavelli at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1955, Arendt relates that Machiavelli's notion of *fortuna* acts as the constellation of world circumstances without which *virtu* remains unrealized, while *virtu* is a form of play with these circumstances, by which something new is established.[28] Part of one's virtuosity, or 'greatness,' is being attuned to unexpected changes that can cause unprecedented situations that are difficult to get our bearings on, when we are caught up in the unfolding of the performance itself. The actor must be able to act within a contextual situation which itself is not transparent. Virtuosity of action takes account of the complex, concrete situation in which the actor performs, the interdependence of actors, the objectivity of facts and relevant events. Great political speech, according to Arendt, transcends the instrumental manipulation of facts according to one's own pre-determined ends. It takes into account the perspectives of other actors. Virtuosity cannot be displayed by ignoring or concealing the inconvenient facts and conflicting interests that *fortuna* presents. Further, what *fortuna* presents can be utterly unexpected. In this regard, our theatre metaphor is limited, as actors in a theatre are allowed to rehearse from a script in private. If we exclude the phenomenon of improvisation, these actors know exactly when to enter onstage. Political action is different in a way well illustrated by Bonnie Honig:

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[27] Ibid., 97.

[28] Arendt, "Machiavelli, Niccolo," image 10. The Arendt archives of the Library of Congress were accessed through the Arendt Center digital archive at the New School for Social Research, New York. At this archive, documents are listed according to image number.

> Action is self-surprising…in the sense that it happens to us. We do not decide to perform, then enter the public realm, and submit our performance to the contingency that characterizes that realm. Often, political action comes to us; it involves us in ways that are not deliberate, willful, or intended. Action produces its actors; episodically, temporarily, we are its agonistic achievement.[29]

Compared to the productive arts, whose end is a final product, action as performative virtuosity contains its end, or *telos*, within its own unfolding process.[30] Dancing, play-acting, and musical performances, on their own, leave no physical product once the curtains close. What appears in the performance is inseparable from the performance itself – it is the *virtuosity* demonstrated in performing well that is the end. Arendt tries to rearticulate the essence of political action, in its living performance of deeds and speech, as similar to performance art, an activity for its own sake whose end is inseparable from its doing. Here Arendt appeals to Aristotle's notion of *energeia* as activity whose *telos* of "living well" is not pursued as an end outside of its own performance, and leaves no other work behind, but rather exhausts and actualizes itself in the performance.[31] The performance metaphor illuminates action's unique quality as self-contained, its unity of end and energy, and the dignity of the activity itself, which does not find its end in any reification or separate work. Arendt recalls the Periclean and Homeric insistence of the greatness of the living deed and spoken word, whose performance generates *dynamis*, breaks through the common and reified interpretations of Being and reaches into what is extraordinary.

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[29] Honig, "Toward an Agonistic Feminism," 145.
[30] Arendt, "What Is Freedom?" 153.

According to Patchen Markell, Arendt restores the concept of activity to Aristotle's *energeia*, so that to be actual is not to realize a potential set of dormant qualities within the individual, but rather to be engaged in activity that reconceives its possibilities as it proceeds, re-attuning to the changing situation of action that calls for response. Within this image of virtuous attunement, Arendt denies a self that is the fully actualized embodiment of human potentiality. Contrarily, the notion of a self-transparent subject who has reached full actualization prior to his action provides the ground for the division inherent to sovereign rule between ruler and ruled, between one who is actualized and one who still needs to be brought from potentiality to actuality.[32]

The performance metaphor helps illuminate another fundamental aspect of Arendt's notion of freedom as action, that freedom is actualized not as a disposition of the actor's will, but rather that it is actualized in the space of intersubjective appearance. To perform and to begin require a conception of freedom related not only to a subjective will that is free insofar as it is undetermined, or determined by a universal law, but that rather relates to the objective possibility to spontaneously act. Arendt decisively distinguishes free acts from acts self-consciously determined according to the mind's recognition of an internally logical premise. Free acts, she suggests, are spontaneous beginnings whose multifarious potential effects within the web of relationships cannot be mastered or secured by logic. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt writes:

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[31] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 185.
[32] Markell, "The Rule of the People," 11.

> The tyranny of logicality begins with the mind's submission to logic as a never-ending process, on which man relies in order to engender his thoughts. By this submission, he surrenders his inner freedom as he surrenders his freedom of movement when he bows down to an outward tyranny. Freedom as an inner capacity of man is identical with the capacity to begin, just as freedom as a political reality is identical with a space of movement between men. Over the beginning, no logic, no cogent deduction can have any power, because its chain presupposes, in the form of a premise, the beginning.[33]

Arendt states that freedom is based not on an *I-will*, or an *I-know*, but an *I-can*. In performance, it is not enough that the performer intend or *will* their performance to be great, but he must *perform* well, since only what appears on stage has public reality. An act must take place, so the performer must be free to dispose of his faculties then and there, as part of the spectacle. Arendt argues that people are free only as long as they act. Action cannot be deferred to representatives; instead, freedom consists in an actor's direct engagement in action: "The *raison d'être* of politics is freedom, and its field of experience is action."[34]

Montesquieu, who Arendt sees as political secularism's greatest representative, perceives a particularly political form of freedom, distinct from philosophical freedom. The philosophical freedom of the *I-will* is independent of the actual attainment of goals that the will sets, whereas political freedom consists in *being able* to do what one ought to will, so that both exterior and interior circumstances must be fitting for the realization of political freedom.[35] Arendt holds that political freedom does not appear in the realm of thought or of feeling, in one's dialogue with oneself, or as an attribute of the will, but rather in the shared political world of human interaction, through action, as a demonstrable fact. She introduces this thesis as a way of explaining the apparent contradiction, treated by Kant, between free will and the principle of causality. In light of the principle of causality, subjective motives for action appear like a force of motion in nature, as determined and un-free. On the other hand, the test of causality, as the predictability of effects, cannot be neatly applied to human affairs, since their causes, or motives, are not transparently available. Human motives are ultimately hidden not only from spectators, but from the actor's own introspection. There is an antinomy between practical freedom and theoretical non-freedom. While Kant tried to save the free will from causal determination, his free willing subject never appears in the phenomenal world. Hegel's system of philosophy strives to show, contra Kant, that the free will must, indeed, appear in the world for freedom to be actual. However, one decisive difference between Arendt and Hegel is that Arendt refuses to concede that the will, "whose essential activity consists in dictate and command should be the harborer of freedom."[36]

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[33] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 473.
[34] Arendt, "What Is Freedom?" 146.

Arendt argues that the tradition of Western philosophy has distorted freedom by transposing it from its original place in politics to the inward domain of the will, where it could presumably become available to self-inspection. She holds that with the Stoic Epictetus, originally a slave, freedom is focalized within the inner domain of the will and conscience, so that one may feel that one is free from external coercion, but without a concrete manifestation of this freedom in the shared world. The appeal is the notion that one can attain freedom through self-control, can master one's self, without depending on a world which may deny freedom. To achieve this form of freedom, however, requires that man not act in a realm beyond what is in his own power, a realm in which he may be hindered.[37] Epictetus' free man acts in a very limited, interiorized space, cut off from the world that he cannot master. Freedom is here divorced from politics, since here one can be a slave, and still be free.

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[35] Ibid., 161.
[36] Ibid., 145.

Later, Arendt relates, St. Paul discovered a kind of freedom with no relation to politics, one based on the will, and experienced in solitude.[38] However, he also experienced the impotence of the will to actually translate into the performance of what one ought to do, what one judges intellectually to be good. Similarly, Augustine saw in the will a simultaneous, countering *not-will*, both *velle* and *nolle.* If this were not the case, the will would have no trouble willing itself. Thus, the will, in its duality, is both powerful and impotent, both free and unfree: "Christian will-power was discovered as an organ of self-liberation and immediately found wanting."[39] This form of willed self-liberation was a willed liberation from one's worldly desires and intentions. As such, Arendt argues, it only achieved an oppression or paralysis of the performing *I-*

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[37] Ibid., 147.
[38] Ibid., 158.
[39] Ibid., 162.

can, whose activity is manifest in the outer world, so that the will could not generate real power.

If freedom is understood as a characteristic of the will, it is only in the sovereignty of this will that its freedom consists. The essence of the sovereign will is to command, both in the sense of commanding itself and in the sense of commanding others. For the will to be free means for it to be powerful in relation to itself, to command itself. The *velle* must win in the fight with the *nolle*. It must also command the self as a whole.[40] Overcoming the self implies an overcoming of both nature and the world. This is so, in part, because the self is housed in a body that is subject to the necessities of nature, its forces of gradual decay. The self has natural desires and natural shortcomings that can render the will impotent. The self also physically inserts the potential actor into a world shared with others, subject to *fortuna*, changing situations resulting from the acts, cross-purposes, and various wills of others. A sovereign will must not only command its own not-will, but also the self, as naturally embodied and as situated in a world. The will is thus constantly frustrated and its thirst for power originally stems from the experience of its own impotence. Because the essence of the will is to command, freedom conceived as a free and sovereign will requires that the will be independent of others and prevail against them.[41] This command of the self and of others by a singular will is the essence of tyranny. Freedom so conceived can only be realized at the cost of the freedom of others.[42]

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 163.
[42] Ibid., 164.

Arendt suggests reconceiving freedom as non-sovereign action, the I-can. Action, as the field of experience of non-sovereign freedom, liberates the will from its paralyzing internal conflict with itself, and transcends the aspects of necessity that hold the will in bondage:

> The necessity which prevents me from doing what I know and will may arise from the world, or from my own body, or from an insufficiency of talents, gifts, and qualities which are bestowed upon man by birth and over which he has hardly more power than he has over other circumstances; all these factors, the psychological ones not excluded, condition the person from the outside as far as the I-will and the I-know, that is, the ego itself, are concerned; the power that meets these circumstances, that liberates, as it were, willing and knowing from their bondage to necessity is the I-can. Only where the I-will and the I-can coincide does freedom come to pass.[43]

Action liberates the actor by appearing outwardly, in the world, as a singular phenomenon manifesting a universal principle that transcends the question of the degree of strength with which the will pursues the aim set by the intellect, and the matter of whether or not this particular aim is ultimately successful or not.

Arendt proposes that any notion of freedom as an attribute of the will or of consciousness, any transposition of freedom to man's interiority, depends first on our becoming aware of the possibility of worldly freedom, the I-can, through our intercourse with others. The non-sovereign actor recognizes that other wills exist and that the existence of others is necessary for his freedom, both in the spectator's recognition of his act, and in the necessity of others' acts, promises, and covenants, for carrying the effects of the initial act forward through time. This sort of freedom depends on the freedom of others. Arendt recalls that in the Greek life of the *polis*, freedom implied an objective status, a tangible reality or condition within the world, manifested in relations with others. It was a status enabling one to move, to appear before one's political equals, to interact with them in deed and in speech. This was the condition for felicity, *eudaimonia*, "which was an objective status depending first of all upon wealth and health."[44] Freedom was understood as liberation from the necessities of life maintenance and reproduction, which were designated as concerns of the private, domestic realm. Arendt adopts Aristotle's notion of *bios politikos* insofar as she conceives politics as an activity independent of necessity.[45] Where life itself is at stake, all action becomes necessary, and thus un-free. Later in our discussion, we shall draw out some of the implications of Arendt's appeal to the Greek separation of freedom from questions of necessity. For now, we turn our attention to how it is that action contains its own *telos*, while at the same time disclosing a universal principle that inspires it.

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[43] Ibid., 160.

The Inspiring Principles of Action

Arendt writes that "every particular aim can be judged in the light of its principle once the act has been started."[46] Arendt's notion of the inspiring principles of action is developed in conversation with Montesquieu, Aristotle, Heidegger, and Machiavelli. She writes:

> Action insofar as it is free is neither under the guidance of the intellect nor under the dictate of the will – although it needs both for the execution of any particular goal – but springs from something altogether different which (following Montesquieu's famous analysis of forms of government) I shall call a principle.[47]

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[44] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 30.
[45] Ibid., 14.
[46] Ibid. 152.
[47] Ibid.

In *The Human Condition* Arendt alludes to the notion of principles in the thought of Montesquieu, in the context of her explanation of the phenomenon by which action sets off the possibility for new relationships between individuals. Here she notes that Montesquieu defines laws as *rapports* between beings. Arendt suggests that Montesquieu's chief concern in *Esprit des lois* is the type of action inspired by various principles that characterize these *rapports*, the spirits or human passions that characterize the relations between people.[48]

The validity of principles is universal, unbound to the interests of a particular person or group. Examples of principles that Arendt suggests are honour, glory, equality, and excellence, but also hatred, fear, and distrust.[49] The freedom of action and its inspiration by a principle must also transcend questions of the ultimate achievement or failure in attaining particular ends, in which action becomes merely strategic, instrumental, or administrative. Following a distinction borrowed from Heidegger and expounded in a further chapter, Arendt suggests that actors act not *in order to* achieve such and such an end, but rather *for the sake of* a principle that remains in greater permanence than ends, whether or not the action is successful at achieving its end. Unlike particular ends that organize all means *in order to* successfully achieve them, principles are too general to prescribe specific courses of action. To anticipate the next chapter, principles are like resolute Dasein's call of conscience for Heidegger, too general to prescribe specific content for action.

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[48] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 352-53n. See also Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, esp. bks. 3, 5, 19.

[49] Arendt, "What Is Freedom?" 152.

The distinction between end and principle is developed further in Arendt's reading of Machiavelli. In Arendt's 1955 lectures on Machiavelli, she differentiates between ends that organize means in order to successfully achieve them, and the general principle that inspires action and gives it meaning. In these lectures Arendt suggests that there is a limitation to the means that can be used in action, so that the inspiring principle is not undermined: "In pursuing an end, you can lose the meaning."[50] Arendt suggests that only when meaning is lost does action slide to nihilism.[51] She draws this distinction within her own theory of action. The notion that principles limit the permitted means suggests that they serve to save Arendt's prioritizing of the performative and aesthetic dimensions of action from mere hero worship and agonistic immoralism. Villa also suggests that Arendt, like Machiavelli, draws distance between virtuosity and manipulation or deceit.[52]

In addition to Machiavelli, Kant serves as another source of Arendt's understanding of action's inspiring principles, her separation of an act's end from its meaning, though we must look to her lecture notes for evidence of this. From Arendt's 1955 lecture notes on the "Political Theory of Kant," we find that according to Arendt's reading of Kant,

> Man is an end in himself and insofar as he is a reasonable being, and since I have to assume this quality in every man, even the commonest, nobody can be used as an [sic] means. Action therefore has to go on outside the causality of means and ends. This causality is the causality of the appearing world into which I act; it spoils my action immediately. The decay of Rousseau sets in at the very moment of my action. This is the tragedy, seen in mundane terms. If we remember our schema of action: In order to … for the sake of, whereby the "in order to" gives means and end & determines the success, whereas the "for

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[50] Arendt, "Machiavelli, Niccolo," image 8.
[51] Ibid., image 12.
[52] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 55-56.

> the sake of" … gives meaning, it is as though the success is taken out of it altogether (this is the grandeur of Kant's concept) and we are left with a meaning, which can never appear.[53]

According to Kant, for man to be free, he must act according to a universal principle, even if the act then becomes un-free when it enters the phenomenal realm and is distorted by causal necessity and the acts of others. There are important differences between Arendt and Kant in this regard. For Arendt, free acts require not only the categorically determined I-will, but also the I-can. Second, for Arendt, the principle according to which one acts cannot determine the course of action as a universal to a particular, in a syllogism of practical reason. Arendt sees acts as guided by how the actor wants to see the world, by the exemplary principles that please the actor. One might have to act in a way that cannot be willed as a universal maxim. This point is developed in critique of Christian morality and Kantian moral reason. In a 1964 lecture, "Kant's Moral Philosophy," Arendt states:

> Still, the main point raised against Christian ethics: not to resist evil, in order to remain good, and thus permit evil to spread in the world, could be raised against Kant's complete unwillingness to allow for any exceptions due to circumstances: The first duty, clearly, is to oneself. By acting according to the moral law, I become a "world-citizen", namely the citizen of a world of rational beings (not only men); but this world is not of this world, it is an intelligible beyond.[54]

Following Arendt's performance metaphor, principles become manifest only through the act itself, and only as long as the act lasts. This implies that principles, ontologically speaking, do not exist in a realm separate from and higher than their phenomenal appearances in speech and in physical acts. These principles survive only if acts and words that make them appear are then turned into *valid examples* of these principles through a spectator's narrative, so that these principles are available to inspire subsequent action. To return to the performance metaphor, most performers on stage follow a predetermined script, choreography, or musical chart, from which any additional improvisation extends. Similarly, the language we use in even our freest acts, if they are to be publicly intelligible to spectators, articulates concepts and principles existing before and after the moment of spontaneous action.

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[53] Arendt, "Political Theory of Kant," image 5.

[54] Arendt, "Kant's Moral Philosophy," image 6.

Who writes this script? Arendt must emphasize that inspiring principles survive only in exemplary acts and speech, following her commitment to developing the implications and possibilities for acting and judging without metaphysically or authoritatively guaranteed grounds, as well as her commitment to separating the dignity, virtuosity, and meaning of action from any determining factor such as the self-expressive *eidos*, natural or logical necessity, effective success or failure, or the command of an external sovereign body or authoritative text. For Arendt there can be no script for action if it is to be free. Principles are only pre-existent in the form of examples of past deeds, but must be disclosed in the new act. This may re-disclose a principle that was also manifested by a past act, but the deed does not play out a part of a grander narrative written beforehand.

George Kateb likens principles to the existential concept of *project*, a task without boundaries, never fully completed: "One acts from a principle when one spends one's political life, one's worldly career, dominated by the effort to live up to the objective requirements of a single loyalty, and to do so at whatever cost to one's interests."[55] Thus, to disclose a principle in one's action requires acting in a depersonalized way. Paradoxically, disclosing the *who* requires a courageous self-forgetting. This is but one reason why action requires courage, according to Arendt. Above all, it takes courage to leave the private realm, because in the public realm, the "concern for life has lost its validity."[56] Kristeva writes that the *who*'s disclosure depends on an excess, not only against reification in works, but also in a constant attack on biological metabolism with nature, one's *mere life*. In a decisive passage, Arendt argues that in the public realm, concern for one's own life loses its validity in exchange for freedom for the world.

Kristeva adds that the actualization of the *who* is a "hypothetical, hazardous actualization that is dedicated to hope rather than founded upon an implausible law."[57] Thus action takes courage since one takes the responsibility for beginnings that are groundless, not guaranteed by moral and metaphysical certainties. These beginnings are also unpredictable, dependent upon others for their ultimate outcome. The actor leaves the complacent certainty of the private sphere of normalized processes and interpretations; he opens himself up to spectator judgment, risks finding out about himself and risks leaving behind a story very different from any story he might have originally imagined.

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[55] Kateb, *Politics, Conscience, Evil*, 13.
[56] Arendt, "What Is Freedom?" 156.
[57] Kristeva, 171.

Disclosure of the *Who*

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt holds that action is only meaningful through the disclosure of *who* the actor uniquely is, a form of revealing that she posits as the basis of human dignity. An act must contain the answer to the question: *Who are you?* This is impossible if deeds are not accompanied by speech. The act becomes relevant through speech that identifies the actor and "announces what he does, has done, and intends to do."[58] Arendt suggests that disclosive action's existential achievement is a form of redemptive reconciliation to one's existence: "The human sense of reality demands that men actualize the sheer passive givenness of their being, not in order to change it but in order to make articulate and call into full existence what otherwise they would have to suffer passively anyhow."[59]

At Marburg, in the winter semester of 1924-25, Heidegger offered a course on Plato's *Sophist*, which incorporated an introductory section on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Arendt attended these lectures as a young student, and it was there that she was first introduced to the theoretical notion of action as disclosive of the *who*. Heidegger interprets Aristotle's exposition of the chief intellectual virtues as an exposition of the multiplicity of possibilities of *aletheia*, or disclosure. Each virtue is read as a modality of *aletheia*, a modality of disclosure by which Dasein affirms or denies the appearance of beings. The five modalities of *aletheia* are *techne*, *episteme*, *phronesis*, *sophia*, and *nous*.[60] Heidegger proposes that in Book VI of *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle questions the entities to be disclosed, and whether the respective modes of disclosure properly disclose the *arche*, the beginning or foundation, of those beings. This establishes a criterion for whether the modality is a genuine one.[61] Subsequently, Arendt questions the necessary conditions for the disclosure of the *who* and *world*. She asks to what extent and under what conditions labour, work, and action – which we can understand as modalities of disclosure – succeed at disclosing their *arche.*

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[58] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 159.
[59] Ibid., 187.
[60] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, 15.

There is a curious divide in the disclosure of the *who*, one that is well reflected in the metaphor of performance art. This divide is between the actor's initiatory, self-stylized performance that self-consciously attempts to *present* one's virtuosity to the public, on one hand, and the ultimate impossibility or failure of the actor to control *who* he discloses in the performance, on the other hand. The spirit of initiatory self-presentation is exemplified, for Arendt, in the agonal spirit of the Greek *polis*, where men individuated themselves, through deeds and words, before others.[62] Staging the appearance of unique actors and deeds was the very purpose of the *polis*:

> [T]he public realm itself, the *polis*, was permeated by a fiercely agonal spirit, where everybody had constantly to distinguish himself from all others, to show through unique deeds or achievements that he was the best of all (*aien aristeuin*). The public realm, in other words, was reserved for individuality; it was the only place where men could show who they really and inexchangeably were.[63]

The disclosure of the *who* is achieved through the public presentation of a coherent personality. The actor stylizes himself for public display, and changes himself and his surroundings as he acts. In *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt describes this presentation as a deliberate choice, requiring self-awareness, to act according to that which pleases us. She adds that the success of this self-presentation depends on the level of consistency and duration with which the image is presented to the world.[64] Villa suggests that the self prior to action, understood biologically and psychologically, is fragmented and dispersed, lacking objectivity or worldly unity and reality.[65] He is marked by a multiplicity of conflicting drives, needs, feelings, wills, and not-wills. Arendt holds that even action's motives are hidden from the actor's own introspection. The fragmented self is also the thinking self, caught up in an internal conversation with itself, the two-in-one, as Arendt relates him in *The Life of the Mind*. The singular *who* is thus not a given, but rather an achievement. Public appearance and discourse with others calls the agent out from its divided interiority, where he may speak and act as one recognizable voice. As early as *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt writes:

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[61] Ibid., 26.
[62] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 156.
[63] Ibid., 38.

> For the confirmation of my identity I depend entirely upon other people; and it is the great saving grace of companionship for solitary men that it makes them "whole" again, saves them from the dialogue of thought in which one remains always equivocal, restores the identity which makes them speak with the single voice of one unexchangeable person.[66]

This recognized shape is the achievement of a distinct style of action or virtuosity. Villa shows the parallel here between Arendt's aestheticization of action and Nietzsche's conception of the stylized self, along with Nietzsche's critique of the distinction between appearance and a substratum of accountable subjectivity.[67]

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[64] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 36.
[65] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 90.
[66] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 476.
[67] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 87.

For Arendt, it is the stylized actor, the public *persona* that appears before others in public, that constitutes the worldly reality of the actor.

In a different vein, Arendt holds that the disclosure of the *who* is implicit in everything the actor says and does, and cannot be completely willfully concealed from the view of others. The *who* cannot, ultimately, be controlled and disposed of as the actor wills. While the *who* may appear clearly to others, the actor himself never knows exactly whom he discloses, despite his best attempts at self-stylization.[68] Even for those who encounter the actor, either as engaged with him in the web of relationships as a co-actor or as an observing spectator, it is impossible to fully conceptually reify, without remainder, the way in which the *who* appears "in the flux of action and speech."[69]

So, who is disclosed, exactly? Arendt argues that most attempts to identify the *who* lead to a description of *what* he is, a description of universals shared with others, categories of social function or general standards of human behavior, which conceal the *who*'s uniqueness. Following Heidegger, Arendt insists that the *who* is separate from the *what* of the self. Within the category of the *what*, Arendt includes the actor's talents or shortcomings, the person's function in the totality of social production, their biological traits, objects that represent their life's work, and even their moral intentions. Arendt presses the distinction between the existential *who* and the categorical or constative *what* to further distinguish properly political affairs as those which deal with a plurality of *who*s whom political actors can never ultimately dispose of, as stable entities, according to a principle of reason or will: "It excludes in principle our ever being able to handle these affairs as we handle things whose nature is at our disposal because we can name them."[70] Given the plurality of unique *who*s, the logic of *techne*, which depends on stable and namable entities, is inadequate for fully reckoning with the complexity and dignity of human affairs. As we will see further in the following chapter, it is a moment that politically recasts Heidegger's critique of the disclosive mode of *Gestell*, technological enframing, which reveals nature and man himself as "standing reserve."

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[68] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 159-60.
[69] Ibid., 161.

The identification of the *who* of action is not an identification of an unchanging human essence, present-at-hand, but rather entails an identification of decentering conditions that situate action as a response. The impossibility of identifying a human essence is due in part to the historicized conditionality of human co-existence: "Men are conditioned beings because everything they come in contact with turns immediately into a condition of their existence."[71] The conditions Arendt lists, including natality and mortality, worldliness, and plurality, are significant re-workings of Heideggerian structures that condition human existence. Arendt argues that humanity's nature is precisely to be conditioned by its changing relationship with the world's changing, objective thing-character. Following the Machiavellian notions of *virtu* and *fortuna*, we may read Arendt's notion of the *who* as disclosed in the dynamic between the actor's unique deeds and speech and the objective world conditions (political, temporal, spatial) to which he responds. This view of human existence is historicized, and Arendt is deeply aware of the fragility of the exertion of particular human capacities and activities, the way in which one possible activity, or mode of being, can be concealed by a specific historical age or political form. Arendt deems it impossible for humans to apprehend their own natural essence, behind this changing conditionality, since these observable conditions never condition human existence absolutely:

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[70] Ibid., 162.
[71] Ibid., 11.

> [I]f we have a nature or essence, then surely only a god could know and define it, and the first prerequisite would be that he be able to speak about a "who" as though it were a "what." The perplexity is that the modes of human cognition applicable to things with "natural" qualities, including ourselves to the limited extent that we are specimens of the most highly developed species of organic life, fail us when we raise the question: And *who* are we?[72]

The disclosure of the *who* is inseparable from the disclosure of aspects of the shared world. Great deeds and speech disclose the significance of an historical time and the everyday relationships of that time. Action is world disclosive, and has a revelatory capacity to become historical, since it takes place between discursive subjects who overlay the world of durable things and make it a place of appearance and meaning: "[M]ost words and deeds are *about* some worldly objective reality in addition to being a disclosure of the acting and speaking agent."[73] Further, great deeds and speech have an extraordinary and exemplary quality that calls for remembrance. Arendt uses the imagery of light, brightness, and *shining forth* to describe acts, events, and speech whose extraordinary nature calls for their public remembrance, their glorification. She argues that history should be understood in terms of its unique, transformative, and exemplary events, rather than as propelled by personified concepts (among which Arendt includes *Geist* and class interest), or related in terms of long-range statistical tendencies: “Yet the meaningfulness of everyday relationships is disclosed not in everyday life but in rare deeds, just as the significance of a historical period shows itself only in the few events that illuminate it.”[74] This argument is central to Arendt’s critique of modern philosophies of history, as we will discuss in chapter five.

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[72] Ibid., 12.
[73] Ibid., 162.

It is the disclosure of the *who* that elevates action above the merely instrumental. Without the disclosure of the *who*, action becomes “no less a means to an end than making is a means to produce an object.”[75] This disclosure occurs only when action transcends productive activity, because the *who* is disclosed in the subjective overlaying of material entities, rather than expressed or embodied in these entities. The disclosure’s distance from material objects is part of what makes it so difficult to objectively apprehend.

Action is reduced to the logic of means and ends, the logic of productive activity, when human togetherness is lost. The spirit of togetherness, most amenable to the disclosure of the *who*, is disinterested, in the sense that actors are neither for nor against each other, but appear as equals in the sense of Aristotle’s political friendship. Under other conditions, action may be subsumed to an end set by one interest pitted against another, such as in warfare. Here, speech no longer discloses the uniqueness of the actor, nor the multiple aspects of the action’s context, but rather forgoes its capacity to reveal by becoming an instrument for the achievement of the actor’s objective, an instrument of potential concealment and illusion, should the reaching of the end call for it. Kimberley Curtis suggests that we can reach a situation of disinterested togetherness by suspending our expectations of how *what* others are will determine the actions we expect of them.[76] Only under conditions of togetherness, when no identity is under attack, can the particular *who* be disclosed from behind the categorical *what* of that identity. Arendt admits that when an actor's *what* is under attack, he has no choice but to defend himself as that *what*, in the terms of that identity. In her address on accepting the Lessing Prize of the Free City of Hamburg, Arendt states:

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[74] Ibid., 39.
[75] Ibid., 160.

> [F]or many years I considered the only adequate reply to the question, Who are you? to be: A Jew. That answer alone took into account the reality of persecution. [...] Unfortunately, the basically simple principle in question here is one that is particularly hard to understand in times of defamation and persecution: the principle that one can resist only in terms of the identity that is under attack. Those who reject such identifications on the part of a hostile world may feel wonderfully superior to the world, but their superiority is then truly no longer of this world; it is the superiority of a more or less well-equipped cloud-cuckoo-land.[77]

In response to Arendt's speech, Lisa Disch writes:

> Arendt calls attention to the way that identity figures into oppression: it is a constitutive feature of oppressive regimes to represent specific differences as essential properties of putatively deviant groups. Once articulated, such differences became political facts that are undeniable but not irrefutable within the terms of that regime. The Lessing Address is a performance that dramatizes how to acknowledge an identity as a "political fact" and, at the same time, to refute it.[78]

Mary Dietz suggests that in the extreme situation of Nazism, it was imperative to acknowledge that one's belonging to a group toward which the world was hostile overshadowed any other question of personal disclosure:

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[76] Curtis, *Our Sense of the Real*, 148-49.

[77] Arendt, "On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts About Lessing," in *Men in Dark Times*, 17-18. Translated by Clara and Richard Winston.

[78] Disch, "On Friendship in 'Dark Times'," 286.

> Thus, Arendt wants to free the person from the group in the action context of speech-politics; but in dark times, when political speech is silenced, she insists upon the individual's responsibility to confront political reality...[79]

Some feminist interpreters, like Disch, Dietz, and Honig, shed great light on Arendt's distinction of *who* versus *what*, mobilizing it to rethink gender and other identity politics. Bonnie Honig suggests Arendtian politics as "a promising model for those brands of feminism that seek to contest (performatively and agonistically) the prevailing construction of sex and gender into binary and binding categories of identity...."[80] Honig proposes the following strategy:

> [D]eauthorize and redescribe [identities] as performative productions by identifying spaces that escape or resist identitarian administration, regulation, and expression. In Arendtian terms, this strategy depends upon the belief that the sex/gender identities that "we hold" can be amended and augmented in various ways through action.[81]

Dietz writes that in keeping with Arendt's distinction between the *who* and the *what*, feminism may theorize human persons as *sui generis*, rethink agency apart from a gendered *telos* of the human condition, and thereby liberate subjectivity "from the damaging and unnecessarily repressive scrutiny of the binary of gender."[82] What Dietz calls "diversity and difference feminists" read Arendt in a way that mobilizes shared descriptive characteristics – *whats* of a group identity – in a way that Dietz sees as distorting Arendt's concept of action and as sacrificing the existential display of uniqueness – disclosure of the *who* – Arendt's locus of freedom. Dietz prefers what she calls deconstructive feminism, one that contests the naturalization of identities that are historically constituted, so that individuals and communities are not understood publicly solely on the basis of a stable *what* that exists prior to performative action. Because the disclosure of the *who* can only occur in conditions of human togetherness, when the actor is neither for nor against others, agonistic action must avoid the attack of individuals on the basis of their pre-conceived identities. It must allow for the *who* to show itself. This disclosure depends on a certain level of political stability, the existence of an integral public realm and a diversity of spectators.

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[79] Dietz, *Turning Operations*, 224n.
[80] Honig, 136-37.
[81] Ibid., 148.
[82] Dietz, 131-32.

Spectator Testimony

The role of the *spectator* is fundamental to the performative arts metaphor as it relates to the witnessing and judging of disclosive action. The spectator is essential to the public space in which the *who* of the actor, and the relationships within the *world*, are disclosed. Performance requires a theatre, a public forum where players and spectators meet. Arendt recalls the model of the *polis* as such a space in which freedom as performative virtuosity can appear and where aspects of the shared world are disclosed before a plurality of others. She suggests that the word *public* signifies that what appears there constitutes reality, in that it garners the widest possible spectatorship, or publicity. This posits a unity of Being and appearance. What is performed is seen and heard by the many, from a plurality of perspectives, whose exchange of opinion and judgment constitutes the multifaceted reality of the performance. Performance depends on spectators to witness the deeds and words, the playing well, so that the *persona* of the player, his public character, lives on after he is gone, and a story is left behind, one that saves the actor and his acts from futility. Spectators witness the actor's deeds and speech, judge them, and then retrospectively reify these in the form of a narrative, the life story, for tangible recollection:

> [A]cting and speaking men need the help of *homo faber* in his highest capacity, that is, the help of the artist, of poets and historiographers, of monument-builders or writers, because without them the only product of their activity, the story they enact and tell, would not survive at all.[83]

The spectator not only tells the story that commemorates the actor, but also judges what is worth remembering and how it is to be remembered. Arendt tries to revive the dignity and critical force of *doxa*, understood not only as *fame*, but also as the *opinion* of the spectator. An act's greatness, according to Kristeva's reading of Arendt, "is a uniquely political question because the heart of the web of human relationships is where we shall define what is uncommon, what is extraordinary."[84] It is the plurality of spectators who judge what is great or relevant, while they relegate the rest to the private realm, or simply let it be forgotten, concealed. Thus *doxa*, as public opinion, decides what is delivered over to *fame*, collective remembrance. The spectator is at different moments *animal rationale* (who observes, contemplates, and judges the act) and *homo faber* (who reifies the act for remembrance).

According to Arendt, before the Socratic school's elevation of the *vita contemplativa*, and before the fall of Rome and rise to prominence of the Christian notion of an immortal individual soul, the striving for earthly fame and immortality through remembered deeds was the primary motive of political life, a motive that placed it highest on the age's hierarchy of activities. The mortality of men consists in living a "recognizable life-story from birth to death" along a rectilinear line, out of the circular movement of biological life and "in a universe where everything, if it moves at all, moves in a cyclical order."[85] While Arendt explains the pre-Socratic Greek notion of human striving to immortality in the terms of Heraclitus, this passage reads like a condensation of her own defense of the importance of the *vita activa* and of its remembrance:

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[83] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 153.
[84] Kristeva, 72.

> The task and potential greatness of mortals lie in their ability to produce things – works and deeds and words – which would deserve to be and, at least to a degree, are at home in everlastingness, so that through them mortals could find their place in a cosmos where everything is immortal except themselves. By their capacity for the immortal deed, by their ability to leave non-perishable traces behind, men, their individual mortality notwithstanding, attain an immortality of their own and prove themselves to be of a "divine" nature.[86]

Attaining earthly immortality through the spectator's narrative, a form of imitating the immortality of the Greek gods, is one way in which action may realize the divine element in man. Paul Ricoeur disentangles the temporal features of Arendt's categories of labour, work, and action, which, according to Ricoeur, all have to do with man's attempt to "confer immortality upon perishing things."[87] He sees Arendt's "normative and teleological ordering" of the categories as vindicated if read as a response to "questions raised by the temporal condition of 'mortal' beings."[88] Man's temporal condition is marked, claims Ricoeur, by a pre-Socratic and Hebraic worldview "that eternity is what we think, but that it is as 'mortals' that we think it."[89] Politics thus becomes the attempt to immortalize our selves, an enterprise whose greatness Arendt defends despite its risk of vanity and self-illusion. Benhabib, who writes of the "redemptive power of narrative" in Arendt, suggests that the narrative structure of action and identity are ontological conditions of human life. Living *in time*, we continue to retell the past, to reevaluate and reconfigure it, and finally to reintegrate it into the narrative of the present and into our orientation toward the future: "If *Dasein* is in time, narrative is the modality through which time is experienced."[90]

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[85] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 19.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ricoeur, "Action, Story, and History," 151.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.

According to Kristeva, the most important aspect of the spectator's retrospective narrative-testimony is to identify the *who* of the story, and to condense the action into a moment of accomplishment that serves as an exemplary space. Identifying the *who* and the moment of accomplishment preserves their dignity, redeems them, while providing an example by which actors and spectators of the present and future may initiate or judge other deeds and words. Kristeva gives one account of how living action, *energeia*, becomes retrospectively reified as an example:

> [F]or a true story to become a recounted story, two related events must occur. First, there needs to be an in-between that leads the way to memory and testimony. Second, the type of narrative must be determined by an in-between that provides the logic of memorization as a means of detachment from lived experience ex post facto. Only when both conditions occur can the "happening" be turned into "shared thought" through the articulation of a "plot."[91]

For such an exemplary story to be told, intimate and internal dispositions and volitions must be objectified. Arendt argues that subjective senses, thoughts, and experiences are uncertain, lack reality, until they become transformed for public appearance, deprivatized, through speech or artistic transposition.[92] The *who* is not disclosed in isolation or self-appropriation, but rather is an indefinite uniqueness of words and acts that appear before a multitude of spectators. *Who* the actor uniquely is can only become tangible retrospectively, by knowing and retelling his biography.[93]

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[90] Benhabib, *Reluctant Modernism*, 92.
[91] Kristeva, 73.
[92] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 46.

Between the actor's living way of being and the works of art or narrative that serve as remembrance, there are a number of phases of reification. First, thought transforms merely subjective feeling from "mute inarticulacy" into reified concepts that communicate what was before "imprisoned" internally. In a further mediated stage of reification, relatively permanent art works give human thoughts and actions a representation of their own. However, the price for this remembrance is that in their reified forms, what Arendt calls the *dead-letter*, art works and spectator narratives remain at a distance, fail to fully embody, the initial thought or intuition of the actor or maker.[94] Even the *who* of an artist cannot be reified by his own works. While the work's style certainly manifests and identifies its authorship, it fails to mirror the living person, who always escapes objectification.[95] Those forms of art that deal less with the material objects require the least reification, remain most closely tied to inner feelings and thoughts, but are also the least worldly, the least available for simultaneous judgment by a plurality of diversely located spectators.

Kristeva speaks of the *who*'s dynamic actuality, its dispersal in human plurality and infinite narratives. It is an "*energeia* that transcends its own doings and activities and that is opposed to any effort toward reification or objectification."[96] For Arendt, one's life work, one's reified creations, do not fully embody who one is. This is clear in Arendt's speech about Karl Jaspers, a narrative account of the life of someone she admired greatly:

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[93] Ibid., 166.
[94] Ibid., 148.
[95] Ibid., 189.

> [A] eulogy concerns the dignity that pertains to a man insofar as he is more than everything he does or creates. To recognize and to celebrate this dignity is not the business of experts and colleagues in a profession; it is the public that must judge a life which has been exposed to the public view and proved itself in the public realm. [...] Caught up in our modern prejudices, we think that only the "objective work," separate from the person, belongs to the public; that the person behind it and his life are private matters, and that the feelings related to these "subjective" things stop being genuine and become sentimental as soon as they are exposed to the public eye.[97]

Arendt proposes that the most fitting art for manifesting the *who* retrospectively is drama, and Greek tragedy in particular. This is so because it combines *mimesis*, which repeats the actor's self-disclosive action and speech in its living flux – gestural mimesis that discloses the hero's action in a way free of reification – with plot and the poetry of the chorus. The plot and chorus render the universal content and meaning of the actor's life story, which offers an account of the action's situation, *fortuna* as it opens the world up to the hero.[98] Kristeva writes: "If narrative is to become a means of disclosure and not simply remain stuck in reification, it must be acted out."[99] Further, Kristeva suggests that the theatrical representation of tragedy is valuable to public life, in the staging of conflicts with a view to resolving them publicly, through the observation of *mesotes* in the use of *phronesis*.[100] Arendt insists on tragic drama's special power of reconciling us with past events, events whose meanings are disclosed out of disparate acts at the moment when the actor becomes sufferer:

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[96] Kristeva, 174.

[97] Arendt, "Karl Jaspers: A Laudatio," in *Men in Dark Times*, 72. Translated by Clara and Richard Winston.

[98] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 167.

[99] Kristeva, 74.

[100] Ibid., 79.

> I deliberately mention tragedy because it more than any other literary forms represents a process of recognition. The tragic hero becomes knowledgeable by experiencing what has been done in the way of suffering, and in this *pathos*, in resuffering the past, the network of individual acts is transformed into an event, a significant whole. The dramatic climax of tragedy occurs when the actor turns into a sufferer; therein lies its peripeteia, the disclosure of the dénouement. But even non-tragic plots become genuine events only when they are experienced a second time in the form of suffering by memory operating retrospectively and perceptively. Such memory can speak only when indignation and just anger, which impel us to action, have been silenced – and that needs time. We can no more master the past than we can undo it. But we can reconcile ourselves to it.[101]

Curtis suggests that Greek tragic drama shows a refusal to reconcile conflict by epistemic means, so that no overarching truth is available to determinately mediate conflicts. Thus, the perspectival quality of human togetherness, the integrity of particular perspectives in different worldly positions, is preserved.[102]

In distinction from fabrication, where the *eidos* serves as criteria by which to judge the final product, "the light that illuminates processes of action, and therefore all historical processes, appears only at their end."[103] Only at the end of the actor's life, when the curtains have closed, can the *who* be made fully tangible through the spectator's story. Thus, the full content, character, and meaning of action is unpredictable as it is happening, and can only be pieced together after the fact. The performer never controls either who he discloses to the spectator, nor the spectator's retrospective story, told according to their own taste and unique vantage point: "Action reveals itself fully only to the storyteller, that is, to the backward glance of the historian, who indeed always knows better what it was all about than the participants."[104] Even the stated intentions and motives of the actors themselves do not match the story in truth and significance.

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[101] Arendt, "On Humanity in Dark Times," 20-21.
[102] Curtis, 14.
[103] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 171.

It is the spectator, not the actor, who *makes* the story. The notion that there is no identifiable author of action apart from the retrospective spectator lies at the very root of Arendt's critique of modern philosophies of history. Since there is no identifiable author in one actor's life-story, so there is none in history. Arendt argues that philosophies that posit an author of history are a modern version of Plato's notion of human affairs appearing as though they were controlled by a god behind the scenes, behind the backs of acting men:

> The Platonic god is but a symbol for the fact that real stories, in distinction from those we invent, have no author; as such, he is the true forerunner of Providence, the "invisible hand," Nature, the "world spirit," class interest, and the like, with which Christian and modern philosophers of history tried to solve the perplexing problem that although history owes its existence to men, it is still obviously not "made" by them.[105]

Through the idea of an author behind the scenes, the real story resulting from action inserted into the web of human relationships is "misconstrued as a fictional story, where indeed an author pulls the strings and directs the play."[106] Like a work of art, a fictional story has a clearly identifiable maker, whereas the real story of an actor's life is not made, and has no maker. We shall examine Arendt's critique of philosophies of history more directly in chapter five.

Benhabib suggests that Arendt's "radical contingency of history" is rooted in the moral obligation that the theorist, as narrator of past deeds, feels toward the actor, where the thought "it could have been otherwise" serves as the hypothetical imperative that guides the actor.[107] This suggests that the actor imagines the future storyteller's judgment and acts accordingly. However, in *The Human Condition*, Arendt states that from the actor's perspective, the meaningfulness of his act is not in the story that might be told afterwards.[108] It is only in rare cases that the actor may determine the story that will be told of him. We may recall Aristotle's notion that no one can be entirely *eudaimon*, their accompanying spirit be entirely blessed, until their life is complete. Since *who* the actor is is most fully revealed retrospectively through the spectator's story, those actors who consciously wish to clearly disclose who they are to the eyes of posterity must risk their life in the act that defines them. Arendt refers to Achilles as one who risked life in this way, rather than disclosing himself "piecemeal" through life: "Only a man who does not survive his one supreme act remains the indisputable master of his identity and possible greatness, because he withdraws into death from the possible consequences and continuation of what he began."[109] Only in this situation does the actor come close to *making* his story, being both sufferer and author. This is the paradigm, according to Arendt, of Greek action and its agonal spirit, "the passionate drive to show one's self in measuring up against others."[110] But even here, Achilles depends on the spectator to tell the story. As we shall develop later, it is only in Arendt's later writing on thinking and judging that she tends to re-conceive the actor as motivated in advance by an internalized anticipation of how his act might appear to spectators.

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[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid., 165.
[106] Ibid.

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[107] Benhabib, 75.
[108] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 171.
[109] Ibid., 173.
[110] Ibid.

The Space of Appearance

The *polis*, public place, or space of appearance, is like the theatre that houses action. In his 1942 Freiburg lectures on Parmenides, Heidegger describes the Greek *polis* as the abode of the essence of historical man, where he is assigned beings and where they are also concealed from him, where man's existence, in his relation to all other entities, has gathered itself.[111] In a passage similar to that of Heidegger, Arendt writes: "This is the realm where freedom is a worldly reality, tangible in words which can be heard, in deeds which can be seen, and in events which are talked about, remembered, and turned into stories before they are finally incorporated in the great storybook of human history."[112] In his Marburg lectures, which Arendt attended, Heidegger recalls that *theoria* comes from *theoros*, which "means the one who looks upon something as it shows itself, who sees what is given to see [...] the one who goes to the festival, the one who is present *as a spectator* at the great dramas and festivals – whence the word 'theater.'"[113]

The plurality of spectator perspectives is crucial, as according to Arendt, "[t]he end of the common world has come when it is seen only under one aspect and is permitted to present itself in only one perspective."[114] The dangers of only viewing an act from one perspective, akin to the dissolving of plurality within the public space, are recalled throughout Arendt's work. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* Arendt describes the self-perpetuating totalitarian logic that projects and protects a single, rational or irrational, perspective on the significance of current affairs, while isolating individuals so that they can no longer share their plural perspectives, no longer properly think. Implicit in Arendt's critique of sovereignty is an identification of the affront to political freedom brought about when a sovereign body safeguards and perpetuates a single authoritative interpretation of the meaning of a given act or object. There is a related danger in contemporary consumer society, alluded to above and treated primarily in *The Human Condition*, of perceiving all acts and objects by the measures of use or exchange value. Arendt equally cautions her readers of the dangers of singleness of perspective within philosophies of history and historical materialism, the ways in which the interpretation of an act can be quickly subsumed by its contribution (or lack thereof) to the historical advance of ideals such as freedom or justice.

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[111] Heidegger, *Parmenides*, 92, 96.
[112] Arendt, "What Is Freedom?" 154-55.
[113] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, 44.
[114] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 53.

The metaphor of the theatre illuminates Arendt's concept of *public* as it signifies the *world* itself, as that space that is common to all, the artifact fabricated and inhabited by humans. This constructed theatre, the work of *homo faber*, provides an artificial, delineated, and momentary space whose conventional furnishings contextualize the speech and acts that occur within it, rendering them intelligible for the spectators to judge their meaning. At this level, work and action are co-dependent. For Arendt, living together in a common world is to relate with one another in a manner mediated by our relation to the in-between of fabricated things. While the actor retrieves a level of identity through his relation to stabilizing objects, his relation to this in-between, vis-à-vis another person, establishes his *inter-est*.[115] This is a decisive moment in Arendt's thought, one that is too often overlooked by those who criticize her work for what they perceive as its lack of material considerations. We discuss this point further in the third chapter, on Arendt's critical reception of Marx.

One of Arendt's critiques of modern mass society is that its in-between no longer establishes an intelligible relationship between persons. Part of the reason for this is that the objects of the in-between are not judged on the basis of an intersubjectively constructed notion of their aesthetic beauty, particular quality, or capacity to contextualize disclosive action, but rather by their exchange value or by their utility. For the public in-between of things to properly gather and relate both actors and spectators, it must last long enough to relate one generation to the next. This theatre stands as an artifact that relates current players and spectators to those who have attended before and will in the future, so that the meaning of the performances may be transmitted through generations and be continually referred back to. This trans-generational permanence is the condition of fame, or earthly immortality, but also of the intelligibility of action as natality. A new birth and a new deed must enter a world of shared meanings.

This seeming paradox means that the act takes place within a situation, a context, only through which the act may be remembered: "It is the publicity of the public realm which can absorb and make shine through the centuries whatever men may want to save from the natural ruin of time."[116] Only by continually playing and witnessing does the mere potential of the theatre as a public place remain alive and actual. The space of appearance, the space of action and its remembrance, lasts only as long as people come together in word and deed. Unlike the physical theatre that survives as a finished work after the actuality of its fabrication process, the overlaying space of appearance is kept alive only through the power engendered in the actual coming together of people. It requires not only the work of *homo faber*, but also of acting men. This power cannot be stored up, but only exists in its actualization.[117] This notion captures the Arendtian idea of the evanescence and fragility of the public space of freedom, a fragility made more extreme by action's capacity to destroy the relationships that contextualize it, in its sheer boundlessness.

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[115] Ibid., 120, 162.

Persona*'s Mask and the Depersonalized *Theatrum Mundi

Arendt's *who* vs. *what* distinction may be illuminated by another concept borrowed from the world of performing arts and relating to public individuation and disclosure. In *On Revolution*, Arendt offers an account of public personality through the Roman legal metaphor of the theatrical *persona*.[118] In his early lectures, Heidegger establishes that *aletheia*, the unconcealment of Being, rests on a simultaneous concealment.[119] This idea comes to bear on Arendt's concept of

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[116] Ibid., 50.
[117] Ibid., 178.
[118] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 106.
[119] Heidegger, *Parmenides*, 11-12.

persona, a mask that conceals the natural face of the actor, but lets his voice through, amplified by the sound hole.

The mask image is mobilized in at least three ways by Arendt. First, it reinforces the importance of abstract legal and political personality for the public recognition of rights. Second, the mask presents a publicly recognized and intelligible locus for the amplification of performative utterances that disclose the *who*, a sort of sounding board or site of articulation. Third, it serves the stylized public appearance of a privately fragmented personality. It is important to note, however, that this mask is not identical to the Arendtian *what*. By Susan Bickford's interpretation,

> The mask does not itself constitute our public identity; it is rather a device that permits the appearance of a "who" whose interlocutors are not misled by "what." [...] The Arendtian mask of the public persona is supposed to obscure this group identity by creating a persona that we all share, yet that allows our own voice to sound through.[120]

In her acceptance speech of the Sonning Prize for Contributions to European Civilization, Arendt insists on the alienable and exchangeable quality of these masks or roles. They are "not a permanent fixture annexed to our inner self," but allow us to "take part in the world's play."[121] They are designed to face specific events and then can be cast aside. Thus, they are not to be identified with the *who* that speaks through them over a lifetime of events and situations.

Villa argues that the distinction of a properly public personality focuses on the central role of *impersonality* in preserving a genuinely agonistic ethos in politics, one of moral seriousness, independent thought, and informed exchange of opinion.[122] This form of disclosure is not a revealing of an essence internal to the private actor, but rather, an intersubjective exchange of interpretations of aspects of the shared world. Spectator judgment focuses on the act itself, rather than on the private person behind the mask.[123] A public sphere based on impersonality and conventionality, a *theatrum mundi* of mask wearing, allows actors to be judged by criteria appropriate to their public role.[124] Politics may be raised to the level of opinion exchange, over mere conflict between group identities, thus encouraging the state of disinterested togetherness that Arendt sees as essential to truthful disclosure. Conflict is sublimated to the theatrical, performative realm, and the artificial world is protected from its destructive side, by the disinterested distance that representational judgment requires. Arendt posits the world stage and theatricality, as opposed to an organic community defined by shared *what*s, as the space for action or redemption of human dignity.

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[120] Bickford, "In the Presence of Others," 318-19.

[121] Arendt, Sonning Prize address cited in Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth, *Hannah Arendt: For the Love of the World*, 461.

We revisit the notion of the mask in chapter three, but first point to a possible tension between Arendt's depersonalization of the public sphere and her enthusiastic account of the mask-less experience of her poet friend, René Char, who participated in the French Resistance. Near the end of *On Revolution*, Arendt writes: "The treasure, [Char] thought, was that he had '*found* himself', that he no longer suspected himself of 'insincerity', that he needed no mask and no make-believe to appear, that wherever he went he appeared as he was to others and to himself, that he could afford 'to go naked.'"[125] Char's naked sincerity came through action at a time when assigned social roles and current legal rights assured little stability and meant nothing compared to the all-important principle for which the Resistance fought. Char's action within the Resistance was mask-less, since there was no secure and impersonal public realm to recognize his old mask. In her Sonning Prize speech, Arendt speaks of the individual's removal of a public mask, the return to a state of naked privacy and a "thisness" or *what*ness that may be recognized by others, but that the *who* will always evade:

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[122] Villa, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror*, 118.
[123] Ibid., 148.
[124] Ibid., 119.
[125] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 280.

> When the events for which the [persona] was designed are over, and I have finished using and abusing my individual rights to sound through the mask, things will snap back again; and I – greatly honored and deeply thankful for this moment – shall be free not only to exchange roles and masks as they may be offered by the great play of the world, but even to go through it in my naked "thisness," identifiable, I hope, but not definable and not seduced by the great temptation of recognition *as* such and such, that is, as something which we fundamentally are *not*.[126]

Could it be that disclosure of the *who* operates differently according to whether or not there already exists a space of appearance? To intelligibly disclose the *who*, must one wear a conventional mask once a free public space is founded, but let it fall if this space has yet to be formed, or is dissolved? What good would such a mask do without a stage? It would seem that the recognition of this mask depends on a stable public realm guaranteed by law.

Foundation and Augmentation

The notion that the theatre of action must be a relatively stable space in order for the meaning of the *who* and of the *world* to be properly disclosed and retrospectively judged brings us to a critical moment in the political thought of

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[126] Arendt, Sonning Prize speech, in Young-Bruehl, 462.

Arendt. We may read in Arendt a complex relationship between two types of action: that which initially *founds* the space of appearance and that which is *subsequently performed within* the founded space of appearance. In Machiavelli, Arendt identifies a double standard that reveals much of the complexity of her own considerations on action and the spaces that are created to house it. Arendt notes that for Machiavelli, different actions are necessary and permitted in two different situations. The first situation, which is a concern of *The Prince*, is in *founding* a public space where glory is possible. For Machiavelli, men are all born private, while some rise into the public sphere of politics, which constitutes a rise to greatness, present glory, and potential eternal fame.[127] Action in this sense is exemplified by the Roman notion of founding and *handing down* a city, calling something new into existence, establishing the *arche* of a political people. This moment is critical in Arendt's own thought, with regards to a specific type of action: "Action, in so far as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the condition for remembrance, that is, for history."[128] Machiavelli saw political action in the light of fabrication only in this predicament of foundation, where political man is seen "in the image of the artist, whose material are men."[129] According to Machiavelli, such a foundation is most reliable when it is the work of one individual builder. In the moment of foundation, as Arendt relates it, action *creates* a space for further action to appear. Thus, there is an element of *homo faber*, of making, at work here.

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[127] Arendt, "Machiavelli, Niccolo," image 2.
[128] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 10.
[129] Arendt, "Machiavelli, Niccolo," image 13.

In the second situation, treated in *The Discourses*, the foundation is already laid. Arendt writes: "Now the world and men belong together and smile at each other. Man is at home, he can trust the world to preserve the glory and his greatness."[130] For Machiavelli, action was what made men immortal, what demonstrated their greatness, but only if their acts had "room to rest."[131] For Machiavelli, this place in which greatness was stored for posterity is the state, *lo stato*, no matter what the form of government. Arendt argues that in this situation,

> [O]ne has to obey the law and…the whole people is engaged in keeping it and therefore one can shine & be great simply by belonging to this people; no spectacular rise from one sphere into the other, from private into the world of action (the nobles) is required. *This changes everything.*[132]

While Machiavelli's distinction is helpful to understand Arendt's position, Arendt diverges from Machiavelli in important ways. First, she sees foundation, if it is to last, as not the work of a solitary figure who violently works on the raw material of men, but rather as the work of many acting men and women, through the making of promises, as established in a constitution. Further, while the making of promises *creates* a space of appearance, its work essentially depends on performative discourse, on action. Great words, or words that promise, have a performative ability to create a situation in their very utterance. A space of appearance can be created through the right kind of speech. In this way, the distinction between *ergon* and *energeia* is blurred. What is decisive for Arendt is that unlike a work that outlasts its productive process, the space of appearance continues to depend on subsequent performative acts, subsequent deeds, speech, and promises, to maintain it. Further, this foundation must be made in such an *augmentable* way that subsequent actors can freely respond to their own situations, their own *fortuna*, within the parameters of the constituted space. As Markell writes, Arendt transcends the hard opposition in much democratic theory between popular sovereignty, institutional stability, continuity, order, and closure, on one hand, and the spirit of popular insurgency, novelty, openness, and insubordination, on the other.[133] When action is seen only as the foundation and legitimation of rule, it ceases to be the basis of freedom, the basis of initiating an undertaking.

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[130] Ibid., image 13.

[131] Ibid., image 9.

[132] Ibid., image 6. My emphasis.

Kateb argues that Arendt does not see the establishing of a constitution as *making* in the sense directed by means and ends. He interprets this to mean that the constitution is not a program or policy, not a model for a utopian society, not lawgiving in the Platonic or Rousseauist sense: "Rather, it is the creation of a frame of institutions for indefinite future possibilities of political action, and the frame itself is changed by what it contains – by the experience it shapes and accommodates."[134] Kateb sees the content of deliberative political action as not only concerned with foundation, but also protection against internal erosion. Action in this regard is speech among equals about public matters, speech that renders one's reflexive judgment about a shared state of affairs whose meaning is undetermined. It is debate about the ends and meaning of the political community and thus discloses the actor's notion of the kind of community he sees himself as part of or as possible. In this way action is circular, a constant re-articulation or augmentation of the constitution, understood as a shared political way of life.

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[133] Markell, 2.
[134] Kateb, 19.

But there remains a potential contradiction here, one Mark Reinhardt sees as existing between Arendt's exclusion of any notion of rule or sovereignty from genuine political action, on one hand, and her emphasis on the importance of revolutionary creation of institutionalized political spaces, on the other.[135] The crux of the contradiction lies in what we might call the original violence or exploitation at the base of all spaces of appearance, of all political freedom that raises actors out from the grip of necessity. Regarding the pre-political rule of freeman over slave within the Greek *polis*, Arendt writes: "Because all human beings are subject to necessity, they are entitled to violence toward others; violence is the prepolitical act of liberating oneself from the necessity of life for the freedom of world."[136] Arendt remains unclear about the difficult and lasting contradiction between pre-political violence that often founds the space of freedom, and the non-violent, discursive action that may take place between equals that neither rule, nor are ruled, once the theatre is built. What is certain is that Arendt's critiques of violence and the fabrication model of freedom as sovereignty are dedicated to an alternative, performative model of non-violent action resting on continuous discursive exchange that discloses its actors as they disrupt processes that cover up features of the world that actually may be wrested and transformed.

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[135] Reinhardt, *Art of Being Free*, 147.
[136] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 30.

The Appearance of the *Daimon*

Arendt argues that most attempts to define *who* man is usually revert to notions of the superhuman or divine, a trend that casts suspicion upon the very possibility of an intelligible human nature.[137] It is noteworthy, however, that when explaining how the *who* is disclosed to spectators in action, Arendt herself evokes man's connection with the divine. There exists in Greek pre-Socratic religion a being with a privileged perspective that can tell us more about what Arendt means by the *who*, one that looks out from behind the backs of actors. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt writes:

> [I]t is more than likely that the "who," which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains hidden from the person himself, like the *daimon* in Greek religion which accompanies each man throughout his life, always looking over his shoulder from behind and thus visible only to those he encounters.[138]

If we move beyond Arendt's published texts and search for the meaning of the *daimon* in Greek literature, we see that it is a mediator between the gods and mortals, and a giver of advice in the manner of the Oracles. Arendt notes: "Socrates used the same word as Heraclitus, *semainein* ('to show and give signs'), for the manifestation of his *daimonion*."[139] Kristeva notes that the manifest signs of the Oracles were "condensed, incomplete, and atomized" in a way that gives rise to the "infinite action of interpretation."[140] Like the *daimon* of ancient Greece, the *who* is disclosed behind the back of the actor, visible only to spectators, but never fully controlled by the actor. Arendt relates that in Sophocles, Oedipus' grasp of his own *daimon* is inevitably distorted, a form of self-blindness that is the "misery of the mortals," while the chorus, themselves a form of interpretive spectator, asserts that they see and know Oedipus's *daimon* as an *example*.[141] According to Waterfield, a translator of Plato's *Republic*, this personal deity is likely Pythagorean in origin[142] and was understood as "the *genius* or guardian spirit of your life – which, ultimately, makes you the particular individual you are, with your predilections and life-pattern."[143]

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[137] Ibid., 13.
[138] Ibid., 159-60.
[139] Ibid., 351n.
[140] Kristeva, 74.

The *daimon* makes an appearance in one of the central legends of the Occidental tradition, the myth of Er, which Heidegger calls a primordial myth. The myth of Er is told in the final chapter of Plato's *Republic*, and relates what becomes of souls between one life of earthly appearance and the next, the relative roles that necessity and choice play in determining man's destiny. According to the myth, souls spend ten times the length of their last human life in the underworld or in the heavens, where they receive punishment or reward for deeds in their last earthly life. After this time, souls return to a meadow where they encounter the three Fates, the daughters of Necessity: Lachesis (who sings of the past), Clotho (who sings of the present), and Atropos (who sings of the future). As the souls prepare to begin anew the earthly life cycle, Lachesis, the Fate of the past, throws lots into the crowd of souls, determining the order in which each then chooses from a collection of sample lives. An intermediary declares:

> No deity will be assigned to you: you will pick your own deities. The order of gaining tokens decides the order of choosing lives, which will be irrevocably yours. Goodness makes its own rules: each of you will be good to the extent that you value it. Responsibility lies with the chooser, not with God.[144]

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[141] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 353n.
[142] Waterfield, translator's note, in Plato, *Republic*, 418n.
[143] Ibid., 457n.
[144] Plato, *Republic*, ch. 14, 617e, p. 375.

After the souls finish choosing their deities, they approach Lachesis, who gives "each of them the personal deity they'd selected, to accompany them throughout their lives, as their guardians and to fulfill the choices they had made."[145] With their *daimon*, they then pass under the spindles of Clotho and Atropos, and under the throne of Lady Necessity, thus fixing their chosen destinies. The souls then travel to the Plain of Oblivion (or *Lethe*). Here they camp by the River of Neglect (or Carelessness), from which they are all required to drink a certain amount, before being thrown back to Earth, like shooting stars, to be born again.

This myth serves to illuminate many dimensions of Arendt's account of disclosive action. Here, the *daimon* is described as the soul's birth attendant, a connection to the Arendtian phenomenon of natality and beginning. Further, it articulates one's fateful thrownness into a situational context of action, the impossibility of fully controlling *who* one discloses. In the story, the order of tokens is assigned from without. But, on the other hand, the souls choose their own accompanying *daimon*. There is a degree of self-choosing after the order of choice is assigned. One can decide how one will act given one's situation. Thus, the myth expresses the essential contradiction between thrownness and freedom at the root of disclosive action, as Arendt describes it. We may read the myth of Er as an account of Heidegger's uncanny call of Being coming from both within and from outside of the actor.

Along with the *daimon*, the plain of *Lethe* is another key component of the myth of Er that finds its way to Arendt's thought, via Heidegger. *Aletheia*, according to Heidegger, was the central concept for understanding the truth or presence of Being in the pre-Socratic Greek experience. *Aletheia* signifies an unconcealment, unveiling, or un-forgetting. It is the opposite of *lethe*, which translates as oblivion, forgetting, or concealment, but can also connote masking, veiling, and covering. According to Heidegger, *aletheia* means to be hidden no longer. Heidegger's depiction of Dasein's relation to Being greatly influences Arendt's conception of the disclosure of the *who* as a decentered phenomenon in which the *world* is also disclosed, or uncovered. Heidegger's interpretation of *aletheia*, and its influence on Arendt's notion of disclosure, will be examined in the next chapter.

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[145] Ibid., ch. 14, 620e, p. 378.

In another of Plato's Socratic dialogues, the *Symposium*, the priestess Diotima, speaking to Socrates, alludes to the *daimon*'s mediating role in communication between the divine and humans:

> Divinity and humanity cannot meet directly; the gods only ever communicate and converse with men (in their sleep or when conscious) by means of spirits. Skill in this area is what makes a person spiritual, whereas skill in any other art or craft ties a person to the material world.[146]

Spiritual skill is precisely what Socrates was known for, as is evident in accounts of his unique communications with his own personal *daimon*. This experience, according to Socrates, "does not result from mere earthly causes," since "fortunes are not a matter of indifference to the gods."[147]

Would Arendt agree? Does her reference to the *daimon* that accompanies humans in action imply that action is in some way a moment of access to the divine? In his Freiburg lectures, Heidegger explains the *daimon* in the context of the Greek experience of man's ecstatic or decentered role in the unconcealment of Being. The divine, or *daimon*, looks out into the ordinary, points, and gives signs to man:

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[146] Plato, *Symposium*, 203a, p. 44.
[147] Plato, "Apology," 41d, p. 67.

> This is not a "spirit" dwelling somewhere within the breast. The Socratic-Platonic talk of the daimonion as an inner voice signifies only that its attuning and determining do not come from the outside, i.e., from some being at hand, but from invisible and ungraspable Being itself, which is closer to man than any obtrusive manipulatable being.[148]

According to Heidegger, the *daimon* makes a claim on man, as he who is historically destined to help clear the way for Being to appear. This notion bears a close relation to Arendt's point that action is always both a disclosure of the *who* and also a disclosure of the *world.* According to Heidegger, this is man's destiny because he is the bearer of *logos* and *mythos*. It is only through speech and legend that the divine, that all Being, is disclosed and secured in its disclosure. For Heidegger, this attuned *saying* brings the essence of man to itself – understood as the being whose destiny it is to clear the way for Being to appear: "Where the *daimonion*, the divine which enters into unconcealedness, the uncanny, must be said explicitly, there the saying is legend, a *mythos*."[149]

Man is *eudaimon*, according to Heidegger, if he is properly attuned to Being. We find the notion of a *good daimon* in Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, which English translations render as *blessedness* or *happiness*. *Eudaimonia*, according to Aristotle, is reached only in a complete life: "For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy."[150] Similarly, according to Arendt, disclosure of the *who* can only become fully manifest at the end of a complete life, when the spectator's judgment and consequent narrative is rendered.

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[148] Heidegger, *Parmenides*, 117.
[149] Ibid.

It is clear that Arendt was intrigued by the *daimon*, not only in its periodic appearances in her published works, but also in lecture notes. But there are conflicting notions of the *daimon* to be found in both publications and lectures. Read in light of the myth of Er and Heidegger's account of *aletheia*, Arendt's references to the *daimon* within her account of action portray the *who* as an ecstatic discloser of Being, of transcendence. However, read in light of Arendt's treatment of the Socratic dialogues, Jaspers' *valid personality*, and Kant's theory of judgment, Arendt's *who* also gains a moral-deliberative force. In *The Human Condition*, the *daimon* remains behind the shoulder of the actor, visible only to spectators. This implies the decentered, non-sovereign nature of self-disclosure and its retrospective, narrative unfolding. We recall that this *who* of *The Human Condition* was emptied of moral intention, something Arendt saw as pertaining to the universal categories of the *what*. On the other hand, in subsequent lectures and in *The Life of the Mind*, the *daimon* is mentioned in the same breath as the two-in-one of conscience, though not always equated with it. If we think of Socrates, he alone was in communication with his *daimon*, while others had no access to it. Arendt describes Socrates' two-in-one, later called *conscience*, as the fellow who awaits Socrates at home, with whom he converses in quiet.[151] In a course on Plato delivered at Columbia in 1960, Arendt relates the *daimon* to

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[150] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1.7, p. 14.
[151] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 190.

Theos, "the divine working principle."[152] By Arendt's reading, Socrates' *daimon* is a sign sent by Apollo, the God of the oracles, and makes Socrates examine his own life, a life in service to the God through activity and full awakeness. She writes that Socrates' "life is a service to the god because he makes others do what his daimonion made him do."[153] Elsewhere in these lectures, Arendt wonders of the *daimon*: "Is it conscience?"[154] In these lectures Arendt concludes that the *daimon*, as the divine principle for Socrates, is precisely the capacity to think, the two-in-one as a thinking dialogue between me and myself. For Socrates, it is that which helped him think through the *aporia*, the perplexities, that he encountered in this inner dialogue.[155] But in a footnote to "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," Arendt writes: "[The daimon] is a voice which comes from without and cannot be answered – very different from *conscientia*. And this voice never tells me what to do but only prevents me or warns me away from doing."[156] Similarly, in Plato's numerous references to Socrates' *daimon* and in contrast to Xenophon's accounts, this spirit only advises in the negative form. This is clear in Socrates' description in the *Theages*:

> There is something spiritual which, by a divine dispensation, has accompanied me from my childhood up. It is a voice that, when it occurs, always indicates to me a prohibition of something I may be about to do, but never urges me on to anything; and if one of my friends consults me and the voice occurs, the same thing happens: it prohibits, and does not allow him to act.[157]

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[152] Arendt, "Plato," image 1.
[153] Ibid., image 10.
[154] Ibid., image 1.
[155] Ibid., image 6.
[156] Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," in *Responsibility and Judgment*, 280n.
[157] Plato, *Theages*, 128d, p. 375.

In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates tells the jury at his trial in Athens that on that day, his *daimon* never once objected to his course of action. Socrates' fellow appears in the case of unexamined opinions, but it does not give positive prescriptions. If the *daimon* does have a close relation to conscience, so that conscience is the *who* that the actor discloses in action – a thesis in need of defense, given that elsewhere Arendt subsumes moral intention to the category of the *what* – it is worth examining what Arendt understands by the two-in-one. In *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt proposes that thought is marked by duality, a conversation between myself and I, an activity of asking and answering. Conscience's criterion for action is "whether I shall be able to live with myself in peace when the time has come to think about my deeds and words."[158] In the activity of thought, other individuals, either alive or dead, are represented in the internal dialogue. Thus, the duality of the one's thinking reflects the essential alterity of the space of appearance. This two-in-one of thought, this original and uncanny duality, is the internal reflection of the plurality of the external world and "explains the futility of the fashionable search for identity."[159] On the other hand, unity of self only occurs when the outside world intrudes on thought – when the thinker is called back into the world of appearances:

> And so long as I am together with others, barely conscious of myself, I am as I appear to others. We call *consciousness* (literally, as we have seen, "to know with myself") the curious fact that in a sense I also am for myself, though I hardly appear to me, which indicates that the Socratic "being one" is not so unproblematic as it seems; I am not only for others but for myself, and in this latter case, I clearly am not just one. A difference is inserted into my Oneness.[160]

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[158] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 191.
[159] Ibid., 187.
[160] Ibid., 183.

It is fair to ask why Arendt refers to the *daimon* in her account of disclosive action if it is merely prohibitive, merely advising against action. If we understand the *daimon* as Arendt's two-in-one of conscience, our answer might be that the *daimon*'s silence signals its approval of an intended course of action, an indication that one side of the interior self's duality can "live with" the other side. In the internal dialogue, the deliberation of the two-in-one of thinking prior to action, a prospective spectator is represented.

There are also good reasons to question if it makes sense at all to dwell on Arendt's references to the divine. If we understand the divine as a personal God whose commandments could be uncovered, their application to the political realm and their use to justify the legitimacy of action could induce the most tyrannical of forms of rule, and shut down all exchange of *doxa*, for no argumentative persuasion would then be necessary. This would destroy politics, as Arendt defends it. In fact, Arendt's main concern with the Socratic two-in-one is in articulating the moral-political force of the thinking activity for a political realm where no such personal God can be appealed to for concrete answers:

> For the problem of conscience in a purely secular context, without faith in an all-knowing and all-caring God who will pass a final judgment on life on earth, this question is indeed decisive. It is the question whether conscience can exist in a secular society and play a role in secular politics. And it is also the question whether morality as such has an earthly reality.[161]

If we understand the divine as the ultimate sovereign power, then to assert that action accesses or discloses the divine could be interpreted as legitimating acts with the authority of this ultimate power. But this is clearly incompatible with Arendt's sustained promotion of non-sovereign freedom. Similarly, if we understand the divine as the ultimate Idea, in Plato's sense of truth accessible to the few through *nous*, then disclosure of the divine is restricted to timeless, quiet contemplation or intuition of absolutes. Here, disclosing the divine would imply a full disclosure of Being, or presence, which is impossible for both Heidegger and Arendt. *Nous* puts an end of the Socratic activity of thinking, which is dialogical, and related to the temporal, tied to the physical person's situation or engagement in the city. Plato establishes a distinction in man between his body, or physical element, and his soul, that which accesses the divine understood as the Ideas. One inhabits the city of men and engages in politics, while the other engages in philosophy, apart from the city. This division is the basis of sovereignty and tyrannical rule, the notion that only those that can master themselves are fit to rule others. In the Platonic account, self-mastery is thus rooted in the divine element, the soul, ruling the body. Arendt posits this as the fundamental source of the Western tradition's division of politics and philosophy.[162]

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[161] Arendt, "Socrates," in *The Promise of Politics*, 21-22.

Contrarily, Socrates teaches how, through thinking and dialogue, humans can disclose the truth inherent in one's *doxa*, or how the world appears to us. This thought and argument disclose the political and temporal truths related to men. Being able to communicate between these valid realities discloses the commonness of the world, thus raising them above strict subjectivity.[163] The thinker endures the *pathos* of wonder, and does not dogmatically hold on to an opinion without submitting it to critique.[164]

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[162] Ibid., 27-28.
[163] Ibid., 18.

Some skepticism over action and thought's relation to the divine could further be fueled by Arendt's rejection, most explicit in *The Life of the Mind*, of a traditional two-world metaphysics that posits a realm of Being and Truth separate from the realm of appearance. According to the two-world view, Being, or the thing-in-itself, provides a higher ground and cause for the mere appearances or imperfect representations that it produces and that are available to human sense, while Being never itself appears.[165] In rejecting this type of metaphysics, and by instead positing the unity of Being and appearance, Arendt rejects the notion that what we call the divine merely *causes* appearances, while she opens up the possibility that action, thought, and judgment disclose it directly.

These always limited disclosures of the divine, however, do not endow the actor or thinker with personal sovereignty in relation to their own activity or its worldly results. The mysterious origin of our thinking activity – that by which we bring out the truth of our various *doxai* – is impossible to fully represent to ourselves. Arendt suggests that the notion that our reason, ideas, and thoughts come from another realm, is a semblance inherent to the paradoxical condition of human beings insofar as we are part of a world of appearances but possess a thinking faculty that permits us to withdraw from it.[166] This activity accesses thoughts that "of course are never anything like properties that can be predicated of a self or a person."[167] The origin of our thinking activity, that which appears to men as a divine element, is uncanny in the sense of coming from both inside and from outside of the thinker, like Heidegger's call of conscience and Socrates' *daimon*. Arendt writes: "The experience of the activity of thought is probably the aboriginal source of our notion of spirituality in itself…"[168]

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[164] Ibid., 36.
[165] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 25.
[166] Ibid., 45.

For the thinker to be called back into the world of appearance, for the deliberation of the two-in-one to be performed and appear as the *valid personality*, a public theatre of spectators is required. Rendering one's judgment or opinion in public consists of a speech act that also reveals the *who*, and can thus be seen as itself a form of action, especially if this judgment offers a new interpretation of a shared event. Action and judgment, the activities of the actor and spectator, do at times unite, since to act is to render one's verdict on what is fit to appear in the world: "[M]en also *present* themselves in deed and word and thus indicate how they *wish* to appear, what in their opinion is fit to be seen and what is not."[169] One of Arendt's most eloquent explanations of judgment as the performance of one's thought before others can be found in Arendt's address about her teacher, Karl Jaspers, on the occasion of Jaspers' acceptance of the Peace Prize of the German book trade. Here, Arendt links the notion of the disclosed *daimon* and the spiritual dimension of the public realm to the performance of one's thought as a *valid personality*, the public testing of one's judgments, which is to "answer before mankind for every thought."[170] This passage speaks to the relation between the Socratic *daimon* of the two-in-one of thinking, the performative public disclosure of the *who*, and the way in which this disclosure is decentered, both by the *doxa* of spectators who judge its meaning, and by the world situation to which it responds:

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[167] Ibid., 42.
[168] Ibid., 44.
[169] Ibid., 34.
[170] Arendt, "Karl Jaspers: A Laudatio," 75.

> This *daimon* – which has nothing demonic about it – this personal element in man, can only appear where a public space exists; that is the deeper significance of the public realm, which extends far beyond what we ordinarily mean by political life. To the extent that this public space is also a spiritual realm, there is manifest in it what the Romans called *humanitas*. By that they meant something that was the very height of humanness because it was valid without being objective. It is precisely what Kant and then Jaspers mean by *Humanität*, the valid personality which, once acquired, never leaves a man, even through all other gifts of body and mind may succumb to the destructiveness of time. *Humanitas* is never acquired in solitude and never by giving one's work to the public. It can be achieved only by one who has thrown his life and his person in the "venture into the public realm" – in the course of which he risks revealing something which is not "subjective" and which for that very reason he can neither recognize nor control.[171]

Thinking, to Arendt, has no political relevance, and does not appear in the public world of appearances, except in "boundary situations." These situations demand a reflection in which "I transcend the limits of my own life span…."[172] It is judging that makes thinking manifest in the world of appearances – this manifestation is the ability to tell right from wrong, beautiful from ugly. Arendt adopts the notion of boundary situations, those situations in which thinking manifests in the space of appearance, from Jaspers, to whom we turn next.

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[171] Ibid., 73-74.
[172] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 192.

Chapter Two:

Arendt's Response to German Existentialism and the Influence of Jaspers and Heidegger

This chapter examines Arendt's critical reception of German existentialism and phenomenology, particularly her responses to Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger's thought concerning the disclosure of the *who* and of the *world*. Both of these teachers had a deep influence on Arendt. We begin with a shorter section on how Jaspers' concept of boundary, or limit, situations finds its way to Arendt's thought, before moving on to Heidegger.

Jaspers' Boundary Situations

We concluded last chapter with Arendt situating the disclosure of the *daimon* within Jaspers' boundary, or limit, situations. Arendt insists that thinking only becomes political in such situations. Jaspers writes that boundary situations, *Grenzsituationen*, possess finality and are part and parcel of human existence. Humans, as *Existenz*, must constantly confront them. Jaspers' boundary situations imply constantly orienting one's self in situations with one's own particular purposes, living with struggle and suffering, taking on guilt, and facing death, situations that Heidegger also names as structures of Dasein. While the words "limit" or "boundary" imply the existence of an Other beyond human consciousness, Jaspers holds that human thought and action remain within that boundary, remain immanent to their situation, and are incapable of grasping the origin of this limit. Humans can react meaningfully to boundary situations only by confronting them "with open eyes" and "becoming the Existenz possible within us."[1] In this confrontation, potential Existenz becomes actual Existenz.

Within boundary situations, conscious Existenz becomes aware of Being through a threefold *leap*. Within the leap, the boundary realizes its function of pointing toward the clarity of transcendence, while remaining immanent, involved in immediate actuality. This leap fulfills consciousness "in a unique, historic, and irreplaceable manner."[2] Limit situations can only be sensed and experienced by Existenz; they are not known from a disengaged standpoint.

Here we see traces of a precursor to Arendt's disclosure of a unique, irreplaceable *who*, one that appears and performs within worldly situations, but which points toward the transcendent, indicated by Arendt through the figure of the *daimon*, man's connection to the divine. Hinchman and Hinchman find Jaspers' notion of Existenz's choosing and acting within boundary situations as directly influencing Arendt's notion of action's disclosure of the *who*. They write that through boundary situations, actors become aware of their "noninterchangeable existence."[3] These commentators even relate Jaspers' Existenz to the metaphysical "soul."[4] They write that Existenz is man's unique mode of being, the choice and affirmation of their particular potentialities. The actualization of authentic Existenz occurs through an active choice and performance, a living-outwardly of the *who*.[5] The significant deeds of an actor's life are the decisions and actions freely made in such boundary situations. These may be recorded by the spectator as the actor's life narrative, through which the *who* is disclosed. However, the source of these acts, the *who*, is non-objectifiable, not empirically available, but is rather "singular, unrepeatable, incapable of being expressed in general concepts."[6] We recall that Arendt relates the non-objective validity of this source in her tribute to Jaspers, when speaking of the *valid personality* that discloses its *doxa*.[7]

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[1] Jaspers, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 97.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Hinchman, Lewis P., and Sandra K. Hinchman, "Existentialism Politicized," 145.
[4] Ibid.

In boundary situations, Existenz is called to rupture everydayness, cycles of routine behavior, just as the Arendtian notion of freedom requires the appearance of the new. In this respect at least, Jaspers' account of Existenz's free choice within boundary situations is similar to Heidegger's depiction of authentic Dasein's resoluteness in relation to normalizing behavior and public opinion. In a position similar to one Arendt takes up in her critique of Marx and of modernity's "rise of the social," Jaspers charges mass industrial society with isolating and atomizing individuals and then merging them together as identical cogs within a pseudo community. As Hinchman and Hinchman relate, the purpose of this community is far from that of creating space for the disclosure of *Existenz*, but is rather geared toward the satisfaction of mass life-needs through the rationalization of production processes. According to them, the general attitude that pervades the advanced *techne* of mass industrial society is a positivism that applies the methods of the objective, predictable, natural sciences to the study of action. This attitude, captured in Arendt's critique of behaviorism, reinforces conformism and discourages disclosive, unique acts.[8]

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[5] Ibid., 146.
[6] Ibid., 147-48.
[7] Arendt, "Karl Jaspers: A Laudatio," 73

According to Jaspers, the first of three leaps of Existenz is toward an Archimedean point fit for contemplation and knowing, outside the confusion of worldly situations. Here, consciousness independently confronts its own existence as if outside itself, from a standpoint unconcerned with particular purposes and possibilities offered by the situations of Existenz, but rather concerned with knowledge of the whole. Here, consciousness stands outside the world and before itself, feeling safe by the certainty of its own knowledge, as against the finitude of the phenomenal world: "I" am taken "from my existence in the world in the face of the questionable nature of everything to the substantial solitariness of one engaged in universal cognition."[9] However, this universal knowledge lacks situational content: "The substantial solitude of him who knows universally, apart from any situation, is like the naked eye that looks at everything but not into itself and that encounters no other eye."[10] At this point, after the first leap, "I" as existence is only potential Existenz.

At this point, "I" am ready to enter the world anew as an embodied appearance, by a second leap from "the contemplation of things in the face of my necessary participation in the world of shipwreck,"[11] to the elucidation of the opaque boundary situations, as possibilities for Existenz. The world shifts from an object of detached knowledge, toward which consciousness is indifferent, to a world of historic actuality, full of engagements. I learn that these boundary situations cannot be escaped or rendered perfectly transparent. This elucidating thought is more than an objective self-representation of situations, but "prepares me for what I can be."[12] This thought creates a space wherein "I" can "articulate [my] own decisiveness,"[13] learn and prepare for the possibilities that life presents in a way that makes me sensitive to them. Just as the "breadth of knowledge" is found in the first standpoint of the Archimedean point, the "breadth of humanity" is found in this elucidation.[14] We recall Jaspers' notion that to publicly perform one's thought through an elucidation of phenomenal situations – which we may read as a midway point between the first and second leap – is to partake in *humanitas*.

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[8] Hinchman and Hinchman, 157-58.
[9] Jaspers, 100.
[10] Ibid., 98.
[11] Ibid., 100.

The third leap, in which possible Existenz becomes actual Existenz, is a transforming act "through which Existenz becomes certain of itself and distinctive in its appearance."[15] This leap takes me to the philosophic life of Existenz: "No longer do I find myself as an individual living thing in special situations that interest me only in a finite way; instead, I grasp the limit situations of existence as an infinitely concerned Existenz."[16] The origin of the act is a conscious beginning: "Emerging from the possibility of self-being which I did not create, I attain, by the leap, my actuality in which I become aware of myself as having given birth to myself by my own act."[17] Here we see an image of natality, of the emergence of a *who*, but one that recognizes its dependence upon an Other, alterity, so that the emerging self-being is not one that can be created by one's self. Individuation is decentered in Jaspers, as in Arendt, by an inspiring principle. We recall that Arendt suggests that performative action discloses its inspiring principle, aside from any particular, conjectural motive or end. Hinchman and Hinchman note that this idea is indebted to Jaspers' notion of "unconditional action," an existential choice made on principle, one that performatively manifests, in the phenomenal realm, the actor's self-conscious verdict as to what is "essential for all eternity."[18] According to Arendt's language in the *laudatio* to Jaspers, it is to perform or answer for one's thought before others, to disclose to the public how the world appears to them.

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[12] Ibid., 99.
[13] Ibid., 100.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 99.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 100.

Jaspers' concept of communication is relevant in this context. Hinchman and Hinchman write that for Jaspers, Existenz experiences itself most fully in readiness for another. It becomes visible, real, along with other Existenzen, by providing an intersubjective space of appearance for one another.[19] In Arendt's *laudatio*, she writes that the *daimon*, the personal element in man, only appears where this space exists, and never in solitude.[20] This is one of the main reasons that Arendt sides with Jaspers over Heidegger on the question of the disclosive *who*'s relation to others. Like Jaspers, Arendt suggests that humans may transcend their isolation through "shared endeavors,"[21] but also through the articulation and recognition of divergent *doxai*, something that, for Arendt, is a pre-condition to the disclosure of the *who* and the basis of political power.

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[18] Hinchman and Hinchman, 162.
[19] Ibid., 152.
[20] Arendt, "Karl Jaspers: A Laudatio," 73.
[21] Hinchman and Hinchman, 151.

Heidegger's Influence

Especially since the publication of the correspondence between Arendt and Heidegger, much has been written about their intimate relationship. There has been speculation about how their personal connection, spanning half a century, helped shape their written work. In this chapter, however, we limit our research matter to published texts and lecture notes, leaving their personal correspondence aside. Heidegger developed the ideas of *Being and Time* while offering lectures on Greek philosophy, the originality of which attracted young scholars from across Germany. At Marburg, in the winter semester of 1924-25, Heidegger gave a course on Plato's *Sophist*, which incorporated an introductory section on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. These lectures were attended by Hans-Georg Gadamer, Leo Strauss, and Arendt, among others. It is striking how concepts that Heidegger engages with in this particular course – in his re-appropriation of Platonic and Aristotelian concepts that anticipate his existential analytic of *Being and Time* – find new, altered form throughout Arendt's subsequent writing. As Jacques Taminiaux notes, Arendt engaged in her own hermeneutic re-appropriation of key concepts from this course, so that much of her work can be read as a sustained critical response to Heidegger.[22] Thus, we turn to these lectures, in addition to *Being and Time*, as a primary source for tracing Heidegger's influence on Arendt and for elucidating Arendt's response.

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[22] Taminiaux, *Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker*, 10, 17.

Our analysis strives to further explore themes previously treated by Taminiaux and by Villa. While Taminiaux's analysis centers on Arendt's situating disclosive *praxis* within the context of a plurality of individuals with various *doxai* – as a response to Heidegger's solipsistic and contemplative individuation – he also reminds his readers, in an appendix, of Arendt's methodological indebtedness to Heidegger:

> Arendt certainly owes to the early teaching of Heidegger a peculiar phenomenological method. It combines a historical genealogy of many philosophical notions and a description of their relevance to specific experiences. This method aims at dismantling, or deconstructing, many theses or conceptual structures that belong to the legacy of the history of philosophy and that are often taken for granted because no attention is paid to the specific phenomena to which they correspond. Such a deconstruction, therefore, has two sides: on the one hand, it includes a criticism of many fallacious generalizations or amalgamations; on the other hand, it requires the introduction of many phenomenological distinctions covered over by those fallacies.[23]

For his part, Villa proposes three broad areas in which Arendt recasts Heidegger's theory. According to him, the Heidegger of *Being and Time* conceives of freedom in a way that avoids the reductionist and anti-worldly tendency of subject-centered conceptions. Dasein's disclosive relation to Being becomes central to Arendt's theorizing of action in non-teleological terms. In our discussion, we explore how Heidegger's depiction of Dasein's relation to Being also marks Arendt's conception of the disclosure of the *who* as a decentered phenomenon in which the *world* is also disclosed. The central notion pertaining to this theme is that of *aletheia*, the primordial Greek concept of truth as *unconcealment* or *disclosure*. An additional set of Heidegger's lectures deals directly with this concept and therefore serves as an additional source for our examination: the 1942 Freiburg lectures on Parmenides.

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[23] Ibid., 199.

Secondly, Villa presents Heidegger's diagnosis of alienation rooted in the attempt to cast the subject as the foundational role in epistemology and ontology. Arendt mobilizes this to critique the modern political consequences of subjectification. This chapter explores the Heideggerian and Arendtian notions of the consequences of positing the solitary and self-transparent "I" as the ground of Being, knowledge, and action. It also examines the related distinction between the *what* and the *who*.

Thirdly, Heidegger's later work, after the *kehre*, exposes a will to mastery and security underlying Western metaphysics. Arendt recasts this dimension of Heidegger to show philosophy's hostility to contingency and plurality, one that leads it to reinterpret action in a way that excludes these dimensions. Arendt argues that the tradition since Plato has regarded politics in a way that universalizes the fabrication logic, the *techne*, of *poiesis*. As we saw in chapter one, Arendt sees *techne* and *poiesis* as incarnated in modernity as technical rationality, with its tendency to instrumentally schematize the world as means to the end of a sovereign will to control, thus losing the notion of intrinsic value, so that no activity is seen as self-contained and performed for its own sake. Similarly, Heidegger criticizes the Western metaphysical tradition's ontological bias toward a universalization of the fabrication experience, which has encouraged a human will to security and sovereign control of the world in response to a *resentment* toward the groundless, contingent, and finite aspects of human experience. This theme is developed in Heidegger's notion of technological enframing. The final Heideggerian texts that frame our analysis thus relate to a particular form of disclosure, proper to modern technology. We revisit "The Question Concerning Technology" and "The Age of the World Picture" at the end of this chapter, to identify parallels with Arendt's thesis on the modern universalization of the logic of *techne*, and as a transition to an analysis of her critical encounter with Marx, in chapter three.

Truth as *Aletheia*: Heidegger's Critique of Traditional Ontology

As we saw in the last chapter, Arendt reads the tradition of Western political philosophy as a recuperation of acting as making, politics as art or *techne*, and freedom as sovereign will. According to Villa, Arendt reveals the phenomenal core of the pre-Socratic Greek experience of politics by dissolving the tradition's productionist ontological prejudice. Then, she constructs a phenomenology of action on the basis of this primordial experience. This gesture, according to Villa, is deeply indebted to Heidegger: "Arendt's single-minded attempt to rescue action from the distorting metaphors of politics as making or plastic art flows, I would suggest, from her appreciation of the political implications of what Heidegger discovered when he went back to the 'ground' of metaphysics."[24] Heidegger's return to the primordial experience of Being, and subsequent articulation of a fundamental ontology through an existential analytic of Dasein, represents a radical shift that is central to Arendt's conception of freedom as a worldly reality and a mode of being as nonsovereign disclosure, rather than as a property or determination of the subject or will. Both Kristeva and Benhabib also insist that Arendt's notion of disclosure must be read within the context of Heidegger's notion of Being as disclosure, *Erschlossenheit*.[25]

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[24] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 170.

Both before and after the *kehre*, Heidegger sustains a critique of traditional metaphysics and its conception of *logos*. He sees the productionist ontological prejudices of the metaphysical tradition as obscuring a more primordial experience of Being, an experience from which traditional ontology, begun by Plato and Aristotle, is derivative. Heidegger seeks to make the question of Being and its history transparent and available for Dasein's interpretive and creative re-appropriation, by uncovering the primordial experiences in which Western civilization achieved its first ways of determining and discovering the nature of Being. This primordial experience of Being is characterized by *aletheia*. Heidegger's notion of *aletheia*, recast in Arendt's notion of *disclosure*, gives Arendt a framework to consider the *vita activa* in a way that abandons a teleological approach based on a given definition of the *what* of human nature and its ends, to focus rather on the conditions necessary for the disclosure of meanings of the *who* and of the *world*.

Aletheia, according to Heidegger, was the central concept for understanding the truth or presence of Being in the pre-Socratic Greek experience. In his 1942 Parmenides lectures at Freiburg, Heidegger suggests that the German *Entbergung*, or *disclosure*, comes closer to the original meaning of *aletheia*, but that *Unverborgenheit*, or *unconcealedness*, is the more direct translation.[26]

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[25] Kristeva, 251n; Benhabib, 110.

[26] Heidegger, *Parmenides*, 12.

Aletheia signifies an unconcealment, unveiling, or un-forgetting. It is the opposite of *lethe*, which translates as oblivion, forgetting, or concealment, and which, significantly, is the name of the plain surrounding the river from which souls drink in the myth of Er. According to Heidegger, *aletheia* means to be hidden no longer. In the Marburg lectures that Arendt attended in 1924-25, Heidegger states: "This privative expression indicates that the Greeks had some understanding of the fact that the uncoveredness of the world must be wrested, that it is initially and for the most part not available."[27] In the introduction of *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes that in any way of comporting toward an entity, there lies, *a priori*, an enigma. Humans already live in an understanding of Being, but it is still veiled in darkness.[28]

Aletheia signifies truth as an *event* (*Ereignis*) of disclosure. Being is thus understood temporally as *physis*, self-emergence, and coming-into-the-light. Disclosive events take place in a dialectic between *aletheia* and *lethe*. In the 1942 Parmenides lecture, Heidegger states that *lethe* bears the connotation of masking, veiling, and covering. Human beings perform concealments of entities and of the concealments themselves. In *lethe*, there are two orders of concealment. First, I am concealed from myself in relation to something that would otherwise be unconcealed. Then, the concealment itself is concealed, or forgotten. However, *lethe* also signifies conserving, preserving, sheltering, holding back, entrusting, and appropriating. Further, disclosure, as the removal of concealedness, is at the same time an enclosure, or a preserving sheltering of what is unconcealed.

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[27] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, 11.
[28] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 23.

Disclosure thus relies on a certain concealment. Some concealments, like secrets or mysteries, "impart and bestow what is essential"[29] by not surrendering the treasures of what is bestowed – its richness is attained to the degree that it is protected against abuse. Heidegger writes: "The proper relation to the rare is not to chase after it but to leave it at rest by acknowledging the concealment."[30] We see here an important source for Arendt's development of the sheltering private sphere, as well as the wearing of masks or *personas* in a depersonalized public sphere. This is partly because disclosive action presupposes the concealing preservation of the private from where we arise and to which we disappear.

Aletheia must be differentiated from the notion of truth as a *correspondence* between a thought, representation, or predicate, on one hand, and a given state of affairs, on the other. This, according to Heidegger, is precisely the notion of truth that the Socratic school introduced and that subsequently concealed the original experience of *aletheia*. Mark Wrathall writes that truth as *aletheia* means that we see truth in a larger opening-up of the world. A being is true in the sense of *aletheia* if it shows itself as that which it is – so what is originally unconcealed is a being, not an assertion *about* a being.[31] This notion is fundamental to Arendt's conception of Being as appearance, as what opens up to variously situated spectators of the world. Although we view an entity from a particular standpoint, like spectators in a theatre, this relativity does not mean that we are cut off from the observed entity. Charles Guignon explains that what we see is not a mere representation – it is not *un*real – but, rather, it is how the thing presents itself to us from that particular standpoint. The way things appear is how those things *are* in that mode of Being.[32] As Taminiaux notes, Arendt deconstructs the paradox and fallacy of Platonic dualism at the root of the history of metaphysics, the primacy of Being over appearance, and the notion of a true world versus an apparent one:

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[29] Heidegger, *Parmenides*, 62.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Wrathall, "Truth and the Essence of Truth in Heidegger's Thought," 265n.

> The paradox is that at the very same time as the philosopher asserts in thought the supremacy of thought over the apparent world, it is in the apparent world that he seeks a red thread that will supposedly take him into the true world, and by the same token he asserts the supremacy of the apparent world. For this true world – which relegates the common world down to the level of mere appearance – is also deemed capable of appearing; and the distinction between simulacrum and true being, which separates these two worlds, is first experienced by the thinker in the world of appearances, because it is specifically characteristic of the common phenomenal world to dissimulate as much as reveal and to allow constantly that certain appearances will be shattered for the benefit of others.[33]

Understanding truth as *aletheia* implies a particular understanding of the nature and role of speech and discourse. According to Heidegger, *logos* means to let what one is talking about be seen. Assertions and opinions do not represent the world, but rather present or disclose it at the same time as they disclose the speaker: “In speaking, Dasein expresses itself – by speaking about something, about the world.”[34] Speech is a way of orienting in the world so that a state of affairs can show up, so that certain relations stand out from the matter or situation that, before the speech, were apprehended in a pre-predicative, unarticulated totality. This totality is initially perceived without the logical structure of linguistic categories, not conceptually, but rather in our practical concern or comportment toward it. Predicative speech raises a state of affairs to prominence and then accentuates an aspect of the state of affairs.[35] Propositions cut off particular characteristics of entities from their pre-predicative, practical contexts and, thus, lift them to prominence. Any assertion is capable of truth or falsity only on the basis of a prior, non-propositional ability to comport with the whole practical situation. Thus, the first pre-predicative unconcealment requires that we are properly disposed to, or can find our way within, the unarticulated, practical totality from which propositions then can make certain aspects of the situation manifest. Those aspects that we find meaningful will depend on, and will reveal, *who* we are. This is true both for the actor and for the judging and opining spectator.

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[32] Guignon, “Introduction,” in *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 13-14.
[33] Taminiaux, 127.
[34] Heidegger, *Plato’s Sophist*, 12.

Heidegger argues that Plato takes the consequence of the temporal coming-into-emergence of *aletheia* and hypostatizes it as a timeless form, self-identical presence. According to Plato's way of thinking, as *ontos on*, the *eidos* provides the *paradeigma*, or model, from which the particular or temporal derives its being. A *chorismos* is inserted between the permanent prototype and the merely apparent copy, which is an illusion or deficiency, in comparison to the immutable form. Villa writes: "The truth of *physis*, *aletheia* as the unconcealment that is the essence of the emerging power, now becomes *homoisis* and *mimesis*...a correctness of vision, of apprehension as representation."[36] Thus, with Plato and Aristotle, a change occurs in *aletheia* and in *logos*. From here on, *aletheia* presents itself only in a representative form. This implies assimilation (*adequatio*) of assertions and thinking to the state of affairs present-at-hand, establishing a ratio through calculating and anticipatory self-adjustment. The essence of truth becomes correctness, in the sense of a self-adjusting guarantee of the security of domination. Heidegger states: "The inception of the metaphysics of the modern age rests on the transformation of the essence of *veritas* into *certitudo*. The question of truth becomes the question of the secure, assured, and self-assuring use of *ratio*."[37] Being takes up its metaphysical position as the *ground* of particular appearances, or entities, the ground from which they retain self-identity in their becoming, in their persisting, or in their perishing. This, according to Heidegger, is a notion of Being that derives from the fabrication experience. Being becomes the stable ground, the blueprint, for something that can be known and worked upon.

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[35] Wrathall, 246-47.

[36] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 168.

Villa suggests that the original thrust of metaphysics is to deny human finitude, to replace anxiety of disclosure with security of truth as correspondence to an order of Being, and to possess the grounds of Being in a way that allows us to dispose of the real as we see fit and to achieve a full disclosure of Being. This full disclosure, however, would require an unsituated perspective, a "view from nowhere" that would transcend hermeneutic interpretation in order to access full presence. The mysterious, what is not yet accounted for, would be incorporated within the explicative procedure itself, so that no appearance would ever be understood as relying at the same time on a concealment. According to Heidegger, whereas the ontologically primordial notion of *logos* is as an *existentiale*, a mode by which Dasein reveals a relation to Being, performed within a dialectic between the hidden and the disclosed, *logos* eventually became identified with the gesture of *assertion*, so that grammar and subsequent language philosophy sought their foundations in the "logic" of logos, which was based on the ontology of the present-at-hand, where there is no hidden remainder.[38]

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[37] Heidegger, *Parmenides*, 51-52.

For Heidegger, the entire history of metaphysics is a history of concealments and forgetfulness. Dasein grows into a traditional way of interpreting itself, so that the possibilities of its Being are disclosed to Dasein and regulated by this tradition. The discovery of what tradition transmits is possible because of what Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, calls the *historicality* of Dasein.[39] When tradition and its prevailing truisms become master, however, what they transmit are delivered over to Dasein as self-evident, which is itself a form of concealment. In the Marburg lectures Heidegger states: "Opinions rigidify themselves in concepts and propositions; they become truisms which are repeated over and over, with the consequence that what was originally disclosed comes to be covered up again."[40] Guignon explains that epochs of the history of Being are brought about by events that disclose an open arena of possibilities for a historical people, while concealing other possibilities. But humans may fall under the illusion that nothing is hidden, that what appears is the final truth about human reality, and that their particular era presents the last word about reality. A totalized understanding of things makes human possibilities and the being of entities seem given. The effect is that nothing remains a challenge or a new possibility, as the world presents itself like a collection of items for use, and everything is leveled to the familiar, albeit a familiar that appears as if it reveals all possibilities for Dasein. What is forgotten, in a second-order concealment, is that this epoch actually emerged out of concealment and that it itself conceals other human possibilities.[41] The self-evidence of tradition blocks access to its own primordial sources. This makes Dasein forget that the tradition even has such sources, so that Dasein cannot go back and make them its own through what Arendt calls an act of augmentation. For Arendt, a disclosive deed undoes an order of forgetfulness. It breaks through the familiar and reveals new historical possibilities or reveals and augments possibilities that have lain dormant. Arendt was in Marburg when Heidegger offered the following:

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[38] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 209.
[39] Ibid., 41.
[40] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, 11.

> This past, to which our lectures are seeking access, is nothing detached from us, lying far away. On the contrary, we are this past itself. And we are it not insofar as we explicitly cultivate the tradition and become friends of classical antiquity, but, instead, our philosophy and science live on these foundations, i.e., those of Greek philosophy, and do so to such an extent that we are no longer conscious of it: the foundations have become obvious. Precisely in what we no longer see, in what has become an everyday matter, something is at work that was once the object of the greatest spiritual exertions ever undertaken in Western history. The goal of our interpretation of the Platonic dialogues is to take what has become obvious and make it transparent in these foundations. To understand history cannot mean anything else than to understand ourselves – not in the sense that we might establish various things about ourselves, but that we experience what we *ought* to be. To appropriate a past means to come to know oneself as indebted to that past.[42]

Heidegger's Notion of Freedom

Heidegger's return to the primordial experience of *aletheia*, as disclosure and unconcealment, carries with it a particular notion of freedom. Primordial freedom, in unity with *aletheia*, is that which man must attain if he is to be able to let beings be what they are.[43] This "letting-be" is at odds with the notion of freedom as the assertion of will, understood as a particular form of causality, or the humanizing of nature through conceptual or material labor, as with Hegel and Marx. Villa writes: "By thinking of freedom existentially and ontologically, Heidegger breaks fundamentally with the ground of the will, opening the way to the elucidation of freedom as a mode of being-in-the-world."[44] Villa argues that *Being and Time* breaks with the subjectivist view of freedom and the teleological concept of action as guided by reason that posits a goal and is sustained by the will. Similarly, Arendt defines action as free insofar as it is neither under the dictates of intellect nor will, but free from motive and its intended effect. This is not to say that freedom and the performative disclosure of the *who* has nothing to do at all with the faculty of willing. To the contrary, Arendt writes in the second tome of *The Life of the Mind* that action is the redemption of the inner war between the will and its counter will, between *velle* and *nolle*.[45] As Taminiaux interprets, the will is "the mental organ of the freedom of spontaneous beginning."[46] The will is groundless, self-causing, the "mental organ for what is abyssal, or miraculous, in human action."[47] Thus, action that discloses the *who* is spontaneously propelled by the will, but freedom must not be conceived by a particular determination of this will, be it moral, logical, or appetitive, for then the will would not be spontaneous. Freedom is here not a question of a subjective disposition of the will, or the successful objective actualization of this will, but is rather grounded in a particular existential disposition within a shared world marked by contingency and plurality. Arendt is committed, like Heidegger, to a repudiation of standards provided by reason, nature, the cosmic order, or discursive rationality, which would determine action or ground the will. This is part of why Arendt finds the *daimon* figure significant to her account of action, a guide for free action that whispers no determining content. In Heidegger's sense, the German word for "open," *frei*, reveals its etymological significance as the root of "freedom," *Freiheit*. The open, as the free, salvages Being.[48] Understanding freedom as an existential, open comportment to Being, rather than as a disposition of a grounded subjective will, posits a *who*, rather than a *what*, as the disclosed actor. Heidegger engages this distinction, followed by Arendt, in order to think about freedom without presuming an answer to the question: "What is man?" The answer to this question, according to both Heidegger and Arendt, is presumed and grounded in advance as the universal "I" when freedom is conceived as a disposition of the will.

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[41] Guignon, 19.

[42] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, 7.

[43] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 143.

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[44] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 119.
[45] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 101.
[46] Taminiaux, 213.
[47] Ibid.

Arendt engages Heidegger to cast a radical reevaluation of action and freedom. Heidegger developed his existentialist approach to freedom, albeit deeply influenced by Husserl, in his critical interpretation of Aristotle. By tracing Heidegger's approach to Aristotle's picture of the intellectual virtues, we can come to better understand what is at stake in separating freedom and action from a *telos*. Villa writes that most fail to see that Arendt views the teleocratic concept of *praxis* in Aristotle as linked to modern instrumentalism, where action is identified with effects guided by strategic reason.[49] Taminiaux, in a different light, reads Arendt as rescuing the intersubjective and doxatic features of

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[48] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 143.

[49] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 11.

Aristotelian phronetic *praxis* in response to Heidegger's assimilation of *praxis* to a self-isolating form of authentic understanding of Being, and *phronesis* to *sophia*. By revisiting Heidegger's Marburg lectures on Aristotle, we can come to a clearer view of Arendt's own critical appropriation of Aristotle, one that shapes her categories of labor, work, and action, *what* or *who* can be disclosed in these modes, and further, how Arendt's understanding of performative action relates to the notions of *aletheia*, *praxis*, and *phronesis*.

Heidegger's Interpretation of Aristotelian *Praxis & Poiesis, Phronesis & Techne*

In Book VI of *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle presents the chief intellectual virtues. Heidegger interprets this as Aristotle's exposition of the multiplicity of possibilities of *aletheia*. Each virtue is read as a mode of disclosure by which Dasein affirms or denies the appearance of beings. The five modes of *aletheia* are *techne*, *episteme*, *phronesis*, *sophia*, and *nous*.[50] Our discussion focuses on *techne* and *phronesis*, the respective disclosive modes of *poiesis* and *praxis*. Heidegger proposes that in Book VI, Aristotle questions the entities to be disclosed, and whether the respective modes of disclosure properly disclose the *arche*, the beginning or founding principle, of those beings. Heidegger explains *arche* as such: "For what the Greeks mean by Being is presence, being in the present. Therefore that which always dwells in the now is most properly a being and is the *arche*, the origin, of the rest of things."[51] Later in the lectures, Heidegger states: "The *arche* is that which already is, that from out of which every being is properly what it is."[52] The second step, in which modes of disclosure are evaluated as to their ability to disclose the *arche* of beings, establishes a criterion for whether the mode of *aletheia* is a genuine one. Arendt deals throughout her work with questioning the conditions for the disclosure of the *who* and the *world*. She asks to what extent and under what conditions the modes of disclosure of labor, work, and action disclose their *arche.*

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[50] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, 15.

[51] Ibid., 23.

By Heidegger's reading, Aristotle writes that Dasein is *in truth*, or has at its disposal, as unconcealed, the beings with which it can cultivate an association. However, Dasein's striving toward knowledge must maintain itself against three forms of concealedness: ignorance, prevailing opinion, and error. Truth as *aletheia* here implies that Dasein must maintain a comportment "to the world and to itself in which beings are present in conformity with the way they are."[53] This constitutes objectivity. Truth in this primordial meaning does not yet mean universal validity or binding force, however. Heidegger states: "Most prejudices and things taken as obvious have such universal validity and yet are characterized by the fact that they distort beings. Conversely, something can indeed be true which is not binding for everyone but only for a single individual."[54]

In the Marburg lectures, Heidegger reads *techne* as the know-how that guides "taking care," manipulating, and producing. The *arche* of the beings of *techne* is the *eidos*, the idea, and is imagined in the *psyche* of the producer, but is determined prior to producing. While this *eidos* guides the process of becoming that is the production of the finished work (*ergon*), this work does not, once completed, disclose its maker. Instead, the *ergon* resides beside (*tara*) the activity, and as finished work, is no longer the object of a *poiesis*. Since the finished *ergon* is the *telos* of *poiesis*, the *telos* also resides outside of the maker, once the activity of *poiesis* is complete. *Techne* possesses the *ergon* as an object of its mode of *aletheia* only as long as the *ergon* is not yet finished; *techne* is only concerned with beings insofar as they are in the process of becoming. When it is finished, the *ergon* escapes the dominion of *techne* and becomes the object of use. As Taminiaux suggests, Aristotle sees *poiesis* as inferior to *praxis* partly because once realized, the end of *poiesis* becomes a mere means relative to other ends.[55] The *ergon* has a relation to something else, not an end pure and simple, but for something, for someone, for further use. In *techne* the *arche* is, in a sense, not available. Thus, it is not a genuine disclosure.[56]

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[52] Ibid., 97.
[53] Ibid., 16.
[54] Ibid., 17.

The Heideggerian and Arendtian difference between a *what* and a *who* comes directly from the Aristotelian distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis*, as Taminiaux explains:

> *Poiesis* aims at a product that is external to it, in which it reaches its term, and shares its reproducibility with those general aptitudes required to produce it. *Praxis* has no external product that may be generalized. What action introduces into the world is the *uniqueness* of someone: not the initiative he or she has of making something, but the initiative open to the individual for being somebody.[57]

In the case of *praxis* the *arche* and the *telos* reside within the actor. *Praxis* is for its own sake: *hou heneka*. Heidegger writes that the life of man is characterized by *praxis* and by *aletheia*, "the uncoveredness of Dasein itself as well as of the beings to which Dasein relates in its actions."[58] *Phronesis* is a mode of disclosure in the service of *praxis*, a disclosure that, according to Heidegger, makes an action transparent to itself. *Phronesis* is deliberation over that which is good for the deliberator himself. It is conducive to the right mode of being of Dasein as a whole, so that the object of deliberation is man himself. *Phronesis* entails a reference to that kind of *telos* that bestows seriousness and does not pertain to fabrication and production. Taminiaux adds: "Poiesis is subservient, while *praxis* being oriented toward living-well is free because its desire is liberated from sheer necessities and usefulness and acting on this basis makes a singular existence worthy of being commemorated or commended as exemplary."[59] In the case of *poiesis*, the *telos* is a being over and against Dasein, whereas in *praxis*, the *telos* is the proper Being of man himself. Thus, Dasein is the *arche* of the deliberation. What *phronesis* deliberates about is not what brings *praxis* to an end; a result is not constitutive for an action, but only the *eu*, the how, is constitutive.[60] The *telos* is the *eupraxia*, so that the concern is not that something should come to pass, but that the action comes to pass in the correct way, "so that it attains its end in what it can be."[61] The *telos* of *phronesis*, Dasein itself, is a *for the sake of which*, not an *in order to*, a distinction Arendt recasts repeatedly when explaining the nature of the inspiring principles of action and the meanings of action, interpreted retrospectively by spectators. *Eupraxia*, or good praxis, is itself the *telos*. This notion is paralleled in Arendt's idea of the self-contained dignity of the performative disclosure.

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[55] Taminiaux, 37.
[56] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, 15, 28-29.
[57] Taminiaux, 86.

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[58] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, 27.
[59] Taminiaux, 38.
[60] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, 34-37.
[61] Ibid., 102.

According to Heidegger, since man himself is the object of the disclosure in *phronesis*, man must be initially concealed to himself, so that he needs an explicit disclosure to become self-transparent. A certain disposition, for instance, can conceal man to himself; in his concern with things of minor significance he may not genuinely see himself. We can anticipate here the application of Heidegger's reading of Aristotle to his development, in *Being and Time*, of an authentic Being of Dasein called by conscience out from the everydayness of the *They* that clouds an authentic self-understanding of existential possibilities. Taminiaux shows that Aristotle's distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis* is the basis of Heidegger's distinctions between "ownmost" and "improper," "authentic" and "inauthentic." Dasein usually understands Being in an improper mode, according to everyday modes of use, or fabrication. Taminiaux writes that according to Heidegger the "production ruling over everyday concern is animated by a specific gaze…the circumspect sight on the surroundings and networks of means and ends looming inside it."[62] This is the know-how of *techne*. An authentic mode of understanding Being, conversely, involves Dasein understanding itself according to its own potentiality-for-being. Heidegger's distinct transformation of Aristotelian *praxis*, according to Taminiaux, implies a reinterpretation of *eudaimonia* as *authenticity* (*Eigentlichkeit*). Heidegger's distinction between the inauthentic and the authentic, between the everyday and the transcendent, is carried through many other oppositions: *Umwelt* (public, everyday environment) versus *Welt* (world proper to Dasein); They versus Self; concern versus care; productive circumspection versus resoluteness.[63]

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[62] Taminiaux, 39.

That which *phronesis* discloses, as good deliberation pertaining to the *telos*, is the *ariston anthropon ton practicon*, what is best in itself for man among things attainable by action. This deliberation is discussion by Dasein over the concrete possibilities of its Being. Its disclosure of the *ariston anthropon ton practicon* is what bestows *eudaimonia*. The disclosure of phronesis is "carried out with a constant regard toward the situation of the acting being, of the one who is deciding here and now."[64] In foresight toward a determinate action, *phronesis* is carried out, and in the action itself it comes to its end. There is a certain pre-delineation of what is for Dasein's sake and what has to be procured at any time for its sake. *Phronesis* occurs among the beings it is meant to disclose, and what it discloses is intended from the outset with regard to its relevance to action. Carrying out the disclosure occurs through deliberation, circumspective self-debate, through speech about something. The structure of deliberation helps us to see how *phronesis* grasps the many *archai* of human life. Heidegger's interpretation of *phronesis* and *logos* here anticipates his notion of "fore-having" in *Being and Time*, that Dasein, prior to linguistic self-clarification, already possesses a certain pre-conceptual understanding of its concerned relation to entities ready-to-hand within its situation, or its totality of involvements.

In his interpretation of Aristotle, Heidegger states that action is carried out under determined circumstances, a situation in which Dasein finds himself.

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[63] Ibid., 38.
[64] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, 96.

Heidegger's exposition of the characteristics of a "situation of action" are decisive in Arendt's notion of the *who* disclosed through action. Heidegger posits, following Aristotle, that action is framed by five conditions: first, that of which it is the action; second, the means available; third, the objects of use standing in a determined possibility of use, so that Dasein can freely dispose of them; fourth, the time in which action is carried out; fifth, Dasein's being with others, so that action is carried out in relation to another definite person.[65] The entire context of acting Dasein, its full situation from its *arche* up to its *telos*, is to be disclosed by *phronesis*. This is an early source of Arendt's idea that performative actors disclose the *world* situation that contextualizes their acts. It is also similar to the Machiavellian idea that *virtu* illuminates *fortuna*. According to the structure of *phronesis*, the action, that in favor of which Dasein resolves, is anticipated. In this anticipation, which is, in a way, also the *arche*, the circumstances of the situation of action are not given, but are still concealed. It is only out of the constant regard toward that which Dasein resolves that the situation becomes transparent. The regard toward the *arche* of the action discloses the situation:

> In the constant looking upon the *arche*, the discussion and thorough deliberation about the situation are a movement toward the *telos*. [...] The elaboration of the concrete situation aims at making available the correct resoluteness as the transparency of the action. And insofar as the resoluteness is in fact appropriated and carried out, i.e., insofar as I am resolved, the action is present in its final possibility. The directed disclosure of the full situation terminates in genuine resoluteness toward something, venturing upon the action itself.[66]

Euboulia, the good deliberation from an action's *arche* to *telos*, is not directed toward truth or falsity, and does not have at its disposal a clear view of the action's situation that it can study, as it were, prior to action. It is rather directed toward resolved action, and is a consideration of what is not yet disclosed, something sought. In this way it is different from the *doxa*, or opinion, of the spectator of a situation and an action. For Aristotle, *doxa* is not something sought, but rather something one already has.

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[65] Ibid., 100-01.
[66] Ibid., 103.

As early as Heidegger's 1924 interpretation of Aristotle, Arendt was exposed to the notion of a divide between actor and spectator. In Aristotle, via Heidegger, we see an actor who has a pre-conceptual intuition of his situation, one that only becomes transparent to him through the course of deliberation and action. At the same time, the spectator, the bearer of *doxa*, has its own immediate understanding of the situation and action, but one that is static, and likely remains distorted as such. There are at least two ways in which Arendt alters this image. What does not translate to Arendt is the notion that *phronesis* makes action fully transparent to itself. While Arendt would allow that the actor may learn about himself and the world through his act, she resists the notion of self-transparency and self-mastery. Instead, Arendt follows the influence of Jaspers, who writes: "The motives of actions arise in the impulses of situations and are thus ambiguous. Within the environmental situation of action, there are many possibilities of what is desirable and expected. Clarity of decision is rare, and usually attained through 'blind rational abstraction.'"[67] Much of the tradition following Aristotle understands *phronesis* as involving the positing of good ends to determine action. While Arendt's actor may envision a *telos* for his action, and have good intentions, his acts throw him into the realm of appearance, where transparency is impossible, and where intended ends cannot always be attained. Thus, instead of emphasizing the *telos* of action, Arendt emphasizes the disclosure of its *arche*, the *who*. Action is always thrown into the web of relationships, where it sets off new processes. Like *poiesis*, it has effects that become part of the world over against man. Part of the reason for this is the existence of spectators and the new meanings that their *doxa* attribute to actions they witness.

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[67] Jaspers, 102.

A second way in which Arendt alters Heidegger's reading of Aristotle is that for Arendt, the judgment of spectators can indeed change. Their judgment can become informed by an intersubjective exchange and an imagination informed by a Kantian sense of belonging to a universal community of judgment. We will examine spectator judgment in chapter four. Other important ways in which Arendt diverges from Heidegger with regard to *praxis* will soon be explored through Heidegger's notion of authentic Dasein.

Dasein's Essence as Existence: *What* vs. *Who*

Heidegger's refusal to conceive Dasein as a *what* means that he refuses to posit the self as an essential thing, a substance, or an object. Villa argues that Heidegger critiques metaphysical humanism for asking why man exists, for trying to redeem us by essence, and for seeing the world as valuable only in relation to that essence.[68] For both Heidegger and Arendt, the conditions that structure and contextualize human existence can change so radically, through new technologies and political forms, that even human capacities previously seen as natural, intrinsic, and unchanging, can alter under new conditions. Instead of trying to identify unchanging human capacities, Heidegger and Arendt both seek out historical-existential structures of disclosive activity.

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[68] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 183.

Heidegger also refuses to accept that it is appropriate to establish the universal "I" or ego as the subject of actions and experience. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger holds that the "I," as the absolute subject that accompanies all thoughts, concepts, representations, and apperceptions, is pre-phenomenological, and he doubts that what Dasein experiences can be explained by it. He writes that if we posit an "I" as given, we miss the phenomenal content of Dasein. Positing the "I" reifies consciousness. Heidegger writes that for Kant, the "I think" is the subject of logical behavior and the formal structure of representation itself. Kant takes the "I" as a subject in an ontologically inappropriate way: as the selfsameness and steadiness of something that is always present-at-hand, and self-sufficient without a world and without others. However, as Heidegger notes, "I think" is always "I think something," and even Kant says that the "I" would be nothing without the representations it relates to. Because "I think something," this something is an entity in the world, and the phenomenon of the world co-determines the state of Being of the "I." Heidegger is critical of Cartesian epistemology that begins by taking the agent out of the world, reifying subject versus object, when the agent is, in fact, situated and involved in a concerned relationship with the world he shares with others.[69]

While Heidegger denies the essential unity of a self-transparent self prior to its various determinations, and even though he denies a "soul substance" or thinghood of consciousness, he still admits that ontologically, there is a *who* that maintains itself as identical through changes in experiences and behavior.[70] But *who* is this? Much of the existential analytic of *Being and Time* attempts to answer this question. It is, in a way, the central question of our examination of Arendt. Heidegger concludes that the question of *who* Dasein is can only be answered by demonstrating phenomenally the ontological origin of the unreified Being of Dasein. Dasein is announced by Heidegger as the prioritized being through which the question of Being in general is to be asked. He argues that a fundamental ontology must be sought in the existential analytic of Dasein.[71] Heidegger presents Dasein not as a punctual, self-transparent subject of will, but as a "clearing," an open structure of free play, through which entities stand out as mattering in some determinate way, provided the context unconcealed by Dasein's taking a resolute stand. This model of human existence, fundamental to Arendt's own thought, suggests why in tracing Arendt's notion of the *who*, it often appears as vacuous, if one is looking for a substantial, self-willing subject, rather than a conduit for the emergence of various forms of Being.

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[69] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 366-68.

Heidegger writes that the essence of Dasein lies in its *existence*. Guignon interprets this to mean that agency belongs not to mental substance, but to the way our life stories unfold as acts and events against a backdrop of practices of a shared meaningful world.[72] Heidegger presents Dasein as an entity whose exhibited characteristics are not properties present-at-hand, categories by which the *what* of Dasein can be understood. Rather, Dasein is an entity whose characteristics are *existentialia*.[73] Dasein exists only in the performance of acts and the projection of possibilities in a world of reference relations into which Dasein is thrown. Dasein's thrownness means that Dasein finds itself already in a world it does not control, with a finite range of possibilities received historically and culturally. This thrownness is what makes Dasein uncanny, unhomely, never quite at home in the world he is thrown into.

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[70] Ibid., 150.
[71] Ibid., 34, 72.
[72] Guignon, 9.

As Guignon puts it, things already count in determinate ways in relation to a culture's practice, the medium of shared intelligibility.[74] It is under the terms of the factically given, the conditions of thrownness, that Dasein projects its existential possibilities. Villa writes: "Heidegger's description of the disclosedness of *Dasein* as thrown projection thus implies a continuing taking up or creative appropriation of possibilities that are 'given' to us, but unrealized as possibilities."[75]

Dasein understood ontologically is *care* (*Sorge*) and its Being toward the world is *concern* (*Besorgen*). For the most part, Dasein comports itself to the world predominantly through fascination and absorption. The kind of dealing with the world closest to Dasein is not disinterested cognition, but an absorbed concern that puts things to use by manipulating them for its purposes. Dealing with entities by using them in order to achieve an end has its own kind of sight unattainable in theoretical looking.[76] Dasein first encounters beings within a totality of involvements, where each entity is pre-reflectively met as equipment ready-to-hand for whatever project Dasein is concerned with. The ready-to-hand is always understood in a totality of involvements, the foundation for everyday interpretation: “The work bears with it that referential totality within which the equipment is encountered.”[77] Entities are projected upon a whole of significance, a whole of reference relations: the world. Being-in-the-world for Dasein means that it resides in the world, dwells there, and is familiar with it. The way in which we interpret entities can be drawn from the entity itself, or force the entity into concepts opposed to their manner of Being in a way that distorts. Discourse is the articulation of the intelligibility of the “there,” an existentiale of disclosedness, in which Dasein is disclosed along with the meaning of entities that speech picks out from the totality of reference relations.[78] When an assertion gives a definite character to something present-at-hand, it says something about it as a *what*. In appropriating what is understood, interpretation no longer reaches into a totality of involvements: “As regards its possibilities for articulating reference-relations, it has been cut off from that significance which, as such, constitutes environmentality.”[79] This parallels Arendt’s idea that when an actor is referred to through categories pertaining to a *what*, the possibilities of myriad disclosures of reference relations is cut short.

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[73] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 67, 71.
[74] Guignon, 8.
[75] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 127.
[76] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 84, 95, 98, 149.

Dasein normally encounters both itself and others environmentally, over involved concerns with what lies closest to it: “Dasein finds ‘itself’ proximally in *what* it does, uses, expects, avoids – in those things environmentally ready-to-hand with which it is proximally *concerned*."[80] Thus, we usually encounter others and our self as *what* we are, or, with what we are involved in.

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[77] Ibid., 99.
[78] Ibid., 80, 191, 204.
[79] Ibid., 200.

Authentic Dasein and its Relation with Others

Arendt's notion of plurality is an important alteration of the Heideggerian notion of *Mitsein* (with-being), the idea that Dasein always exists among others in a shared world. This difference is fundamental to how Heidegger and Arendt differ in their answers as to how the *who* is disclosed. There are, according to Heidegger, different ways of being with others, which allow for more or less of an authentic existence. According to Heidegger, usually Dasein lives in an inauthentic way in relation to others. In this instance, Heidegger refers to others as the anonymous, public *das Man* (the *They*). In the everyday averageness of the *They*, Dasein stands in subjection to others. It itself *is not* – its existence is inauthentic. Dasein's everyday possibilities are for others to dispose of as they please, rather than resolutely chosen by Dasein. The essential character of the *They* is *averageness*.[81] The *They* maintains itself in an average verdict of what it regards as valid, successful, permitted, or of interest. This tends to level what is unique and exceptional, and to gloss over the original meanings of linguistically transmitted cultural sources by treating them as long well known, common sense. The average intelligibility of publicness, or the *They*, is referred to by Heidegger as "idle talk." The set of interpretations maintained publicly tends to control and distribute an average understanding and state-of-mind with regard to beings and events: “We have *the same thing* in view, because it is in *the same* averageness that we have a common understanding of what is said.”[82] Idle talk establishes itself in Dasein, and establishes its authority and universality through mere “passing the word,” so that it is only in relation to the average that all genuine understanding and unique disclosures of meaning can be performed. The average ways things are interpreted provide self-assurance, and hence shelter Dasein, thus covering over the essential groundlessness of interpretations. All these factors level and narrow the possibilities of Dasein. Heidegger proposes that among the *They*, the average concerns and ways of relating to entities are marked by instrumentality and functionality. This universalization of productive comportment toward entities obscures Dasein’s disclosive capacities. Dasein’s concerns become dispersed in the *They*, and this makes it difficult for authentic individuation, in which Dasein takes up possibilities and makes them his own. Dasein gets so caught up in the average, authoritative opinion of the *They* that he loses sight of his possibility of contributing to the disclosure of Being.

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[80] Ibid., 155.
[81] Ibid., 164.

These others are not definite. Rather, any other can represent them. This notion of the *They* anticipates the anonymous “rise of the social” in Arendt. It is their inconspicuous and anonymous domination of Dasein that is decisive. Like Arendt’s image of “rule by nobody” in the highly bureaucratized world that is a symptom of her “rise of the social,” Heidegger’s image of the *They* implies an agency of which one can say: “It was no one.”[83] Thus, no one is individuated; no one can be held responsible for his action. Guignon writes that among the *They*, life is leveled to doing what one does in familiar circumstances so that each Dasein becomes replaceable, mere points of intersection of social roles and functions. As Guignon puts it, we become busy, but tranquilized and assured that everything has already been worked out and that nothing calls for a responsible decision.[84] Dasein is "disburdened" of his Being and of choosing to live resolutely in one possibility or another.

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[82] Ibid., 212.
[83] Ibid., 165.

In its average everydayness, the *who* of Heidegger's Dasein is the *nobody* characteristic of the *They*. It is this inauthentic mode of existence, in which Dasein lives for the most part, that reflects Dasein's fallenness. Fallenness refers to Dasein's usual tendency to become lost in fascination with the public interpretation of the world, of the *They* that bears an average intelligibility and appears falsely as a complete disclosure of Being. Dasein forgets that there can be other elements of Being that can be disclosed, and that the public disclosure of meaning rests in concealing other possible interpretations and possibilities. The effect is a comforting and reassuring concealing of public opinion's own contingency and finiteness. Dasein has fallen into the public world, and away from itself as an authentic potentiality, a form of self-alienation.[85]

Heidegger, however, presents the possibility of another kind of comportment, that of authentic existence. By outlining Heidegger's notion of authentic Dasein, we come to a clearer understanding not only of Dasein's existence as *care*, with its projection of existential possibilities, but also, as Villa has shown, of the theoretical background for a number of fundamental distinctions in Arendt: the public versus private realm, freedom versus necessity, meaning versus instrumentality, and the political versus the social.[86] We also come to understand a fundamental difference between Arendt and Heidegger, highlighted by Taminiaux, between an Arendtian *who* individuated through action within the context of plurality and a Heideggerian *who* individuated through a speculative withdrawal from plurality.

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[84] Guignon, 29.

[85] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 150, 220.

As we have seen, Dasein understands itself and comports itself in terms of its projected possibilities that it does not choose arbitrarily, but that it already has, given its thrownness into a worldly situation, a cross-referential context of significance. The *sight* or *transparency* gained through projective understanding means, "seizing upon the full disclosedness of Being-in-the-world *throughout all* the constitutive items which are essential to it."[87] Dasein is ontically distinguished from other beings that are present-at-hand, or that are indifferent to their own Being, because Dasein's Being is an *issue* for it. Dasein's own Being is the sole authentic *for-the-sake-of-which*.[88] Heidegger's description of the authentic Dasein in *Being and Time* picks up from his earlier reading of Aristotle at Marburg. To recall, Heidegger interpreted Aristotelian *phronesis* as an activity concerned not with the achievement of particular ends, but rather with Dasein's comportment itself as the *arche* and *for-the-sake-of-which*. In his image of authentic Being-toward-Self, Dasein's authentic attitude is not geared toward a variety of posited ends, but rather from Dasein's care for itself. In care, the constancy of the self, as anticipatory resoluteness, gets clarified.[89] Villa rightly suggests that Heidegger's disclosure of the "there" in Dasein's projection of possibilities prefigures Arendt's account of political freedom, in that it transcends questions of utility and of ultimate success in the attainment of ends.[90]

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[86] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 115.
[87] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 187.
[88] Ibid., 117.

An authentic mode of Being, one that pulls Dasein up from dispersal in the *They*, implies Dasein's being-free for its own potentiality and self-transparency with regards to its different possibilities. This is a "*Being-free for* the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself."[91] To find itself out of the *They*, Dasein must first have its potential for an authentic Being-one's-self attested to through the *voice of conscience*. Conscience is revealed as a *call*. The call is an appeal to Dasein, calling it to a *factical taking-action* and to its own potentiality-for-Being-its-Self, which Heidegger calls *resoluteness*. Resoluteness is authentic disclosure, attested by conscience.[92]

The question arises: On what is Dasein to resolve? Only the resoluteness itself can give the answer. The call of conscience, after all, asserts nothing, instructs nothing, and never suggests a content. It never tells Dasein anything useful about the assured possibilities of taking action that are available and calculable. Expectations that it should are disappointed, and, according to Heidegger, underlie a material ethic of value. Such expectation would also hinder the free nature of action that the call of conscience spurs: "With the maxims which one might be led to expect – maxims which could be reckoned up unequivocally – the conscience would deny to existence nothing less than the very *possibility of taking action.*"[93] The resolution *is* the disclosive projection of what is possible at the time, given the situation. It is the fact that the call of conscience comes from Dasein himself that its unequivocal character becomes free. However, this call to Dasein, by Dasein, comes not in a self-willed, voluntary form. The contradiction at work here brings us to the heart of the unfolding the nature of the *who*. The call is ecstatic; the *who* of the caller is not definable in a worldly way. Arendt accentuates these ecstatic elements of action's disclosure of the *who* in her references to the *daimon*, which, in the Socratic dialogues, is a voice of conscience, a call, one which arises in specific worldly situations but which instructs no content for action, and comes in an uncanny way, both from within and from outside the actor.

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[89] Ibid., 369.
[90] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 138.
[91] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 232.
[92] Ibid., 313-18, 341-43.

Guignon writes that as the authentic individual commits resolutely, it brings itself into the situation it gives itself by defining how things will matter in relation to its resolute stance, so that only the resolution itself can provide what kind of stand to take; it is itself the disclosive projection of what is possible at the moment. It is our being-in-a-situation, where things are at stake, which gives focus and direction to our lives. However, these situations can disappear. When they do, experience lacks the unity and meaning that this motivation within the situation gave them.[94]

Dasein, as finite and thrown, cannot choose all possible courses of action. Dasein always stands in one possibility or another, it is constantly *not* the other possibilities that it has rejected in its resolute projection: "Freedom, however, *is* only in the choice of one possibility – that is, in tolerating one's not having chosen the others and one's not being able to choose them."[95] Thus, the call of conscience also implies a particular notion of *guilt*, or *nullity*, that discloses the thrown structure of Dasein's factical existence in the world. Heidegger explains that when we hear the call, we are warned of our possible guilt, or our bearing responsibility as the basis and ground for something. At the same time, Dasein feels a lack, a baselessness, or indebtedness. Transcendence of the *They*, therefore, does not imply an escape from Dasein's thrownness and guilt. Dasein objectifies neither itself nor the world, but grasps a fluidity of possibilities within its own situatedness, historicity, and contingency. Transcending the *They* does not imply leaving the space of the "there," leaving the shared world completely to create a world of one's own, but rather disclosing or creatively appropriating new possibilities in the familiar, the reified, the average intelligibility.[96]

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[93] Ibid., 340.
[94] Guignon, 28-30.

Some argue that Heidegger's notion of resoluteness remains overly subject-centered. Leo Strauss and Richard Wolin have charged Heidegger with voluntarist decisionism, where values become arbitrary and all that is left is a sovereign act of human will. Villa, however, argues that Heidegger does not posit resoluteness as the source of value, but as the appropriate response to the weight of judgment and action in a disenchanted world, the degree of responsibility for our own judgments and actions in a world without pre-given measures.[97] To expand on the premise that Heidegger's notion of resoluteness is, in fact, marked by a decentering of the subject, we can turn to his 1942 Freiburg lectures. Here, Heidegger describes resoluteness as being open and disclosed toward things, and disclosing itself; Dasein is *decided*, in the sense of being *without scission* from Being. This Greek resoluteness is different from modern resoluteness, Heidegger explains, in that the modern one is based on the subject's act of will, the fixed ordination of the will upon itself, the will to will, or the will to power.

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[95] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 331.
[96] Ibid., 329-31.
[97] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 135. See Strauss, "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science," 30; Wolin, R., *The Politics of Being*, 38-39.

Being toward one's own potentiality means that Dasein is already ahead of itself, has already compared itself to a possibility of itself. According to the structure of care, there always remains a potentiality for Being that is still outstanding, not yet actual, still to be settled. As an entity, Dasein never reaches wholeness until death, its no-longer-Being-there.[98] Piotr Hoffman writes that the authentic life requires the acceptance of one's death, because Dasein's totality can be revealed only in its being-toward-death. As long as Dasein is alive and continues to resolutely take a stand, Dasein's identity is not a settled matter, but open to reinterpretation.[99] This remainder partly explains how a complete image of the *what* of the self cuts off or conceals further possibilities of Dasein, in its reification. It is also a reason why Dasein itself, as a constant *not-yet*, can never get a full grasp on its own *who*: "Dasein in general never becomes accessible as something present-at-hand, because Being-possible belongs in its own way to Dasein's kind of Being."[100] Dasein's projection of possibilities in the face of its own oncoming death is, for Heidegger, the source of Dasein's individuation, its *principium individuationis*.

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[98] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 236, 279-80.
[99] Hoffman, "Death, Time, History," 223.
[100] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 292.

Arendt's Answer to Heidegger's Authentic Dasein

We may trace a lineage from Heidegger's conception of Dasein as a constant *not-yet* to Arendt's argument that the *who* of the actor can only adequately be narratively rendered by spectators once the life of the actor has ended. Until then, there still remain possibilities, situations in which to act. Arendt, however, reverses Dasein's primacy of Being-toward-death, in favor of the notion of natality, or action as a response to one's birth. Thus, while an actor may have his impending death in mind as an existential condition of his action, Arendt proposes that the actor individuates himself rather by responding to the fact of his birth, by responding to his first beginning with further beginnings, much like the Roman concept of *augere*. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt writes: "Moreover, since action is the political activity par excellence, natality, and not mortality, may be the central category of political, as distinguished from metaphysical, thought."[101]

Villa asserts that Arendt's distinction between labor, work, and action, as modes of existence with different disclosive capacities, is drawn in light of Heidegger's distinction between authentic and inauthentic Dasein. The same is true of Arendt's distinction between the public, private, and social realms. But Arendt takes up Heidegger's distinction between authentic and inauthentic Dasein and externalizes it, so that the public realm is the proper realm for authentic disclosure.[102] Both Heidegger and Arendt see the human's capacity for transcendence as manifest in authentically disclosive pursuits, marked with their freedom and contingency, rather than by the tranquil necessity of everyday concerns. Like Heidegger's everyday averageness of the *They*, with its concern for what is functionally closest at hand, *homo faber*'s constant leveling of the world to familiar contexts of use also deprives the world of its revelatory capacity. Villa argues that Arendt fears that the fallenness of *homo faber* threatens the arena built by him.[103] He treats the completed object with the same functional logic of means and ends that guided the object's making, rather than clearing a space for the integral being of the object to appear. We will pursue this theme in the next chapter on Arendt's treatment of Marx. The functional logic and average intelligibility of the *They* is further reflected in Arendt's image of the "rise of the social." Both channel proximal concerns into the public realm, and establish the normalization of behaviors and discursive interpretations of meaning, thus stultifying the possibilities for new and unique deeds and speech that would disclose concealed aspects of Being. With the "rise of the social," like the idle talk of the *They*, possibilities of Being are reified and normalized in such a way that the public sphere loses its ability to disclose meaning out of the familiar and proximal.

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[101] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 111.

With regards to authentic resoluteness of Dasein, a groundless projection of possibilities, this emerges in Arendt's notion of public courage and performative disclosure that contains its own *arche* and *telos*. This performance is delivered into an intersubjective web of relationships, one that recasts Heidegger's notions of thrownness and guilt. Here, the influence of Jaspers comes back to light. Jaspers saw existential guilt as a fundamental structure of the boundary situations in which humans think and act:

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[102] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 130.
[103] Ibid., 145.

> Every act has consequences in the world that the agent did not know about. He is frightened by the consequences of his deed because, even though he never thought of them, he knows himself to be their originator. Through my very existence, the conditions of my life involve the struggle and suffering of others; in this way I am guilty of living through exploitation. Yet I, too, pay the price through my own suffering, through arduously laboring for the essentials of life, and finally through my perishing.[104]

Jaspers insists on a courageous and responsible commitment to engagement with the world, in the face of the fear that guilt may bring – fear of the impurity of the soul and fear of unwanted consequences for the self and for others:

> By actively taking hold of life myself, I take away from others; I allow, through my entanglements, the impurity of the soul; I wound the Other by my exclusive actualization and consequent rejection of another's possible Existenz. If I am shocked by these consequences of my actions, then I might well think to avoid this guilt by not entering the world and thus not doing anything. In that case I would deprive no one, would remain pure, and would, by remaining within the universal possibility, reject no one. But not acting is itself an action, namely an omission, which itself has consequences, to wit: Consistent non-action absolutely adhered to would necessarily lead to rapid destruction; it would be a form of suicide. Not to enter the world is to withhold oneself from the demands of an actuality that approaches me as an obscure challenge to risk and to find out what is to come next. [...] Responsibility is the readiness to shoulder one's guilt. Through responsibility, phenomenal Existenz stands under unrelieved pressure.[105]

There is a crucial difference between Arendt and Heidegger regarding the possibilities of individuation in relation to others. Heidegger maintains that the publicness of the *They* is something into which Dasein falls, and that authentic existence can only occur by transcending this realm of others. Conversely, it is precisely in the realm of the public, the intersubjective realm of appearance and *doxa*, where Arendt proposes that freedom and individuation must occur, despite the risk of the appearance of unreflective *doxa*. Arendt admits that guilt, contingency, and thrownness are part of public performance, that this is part of why it takes courage to appear in public, where our acts become part of the web of relations that we cannot control, and our image becomes determined by the opinion of spectators. This, however, does not mean that we fall away from an authentic realm of individuation or disclosure. Rather, it is only in public, among others, that we individuate at all and come to learn about the situations that provide the context of our actions, without which there is no individual.

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[104] Jaspers, 102.
[105] Ibid., 103.

Kristeva argues that unlike Heidegger's Dasein, the Arendtian *who* is not a solitary self whose authenticity depends on a fixation of vision or on poetic utterances. She adds that Dasein's drawing toward Being is an intimate knowing, an excess and purging of the *Selbst.* While Arendt does not abandon the excess of the *who* revealed to its own being, she differs from Heidegger by locating this excess in public action and speech with others.[106] Benhabib notes that Heidegger sees *Mitsein* as characterized mostly by inauthentic interaction with the *They*. Conversely, Arendt posits everyday being in a world of appearance, marked by plurality, as the essential context of disclosive action. Because actions can only be identified through narrative that is disclosed to others, action requires sharing this space with others. Arendt thus "ontologically reevaluated" the space of appearances.[107]

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[106] Kristeva, 173.
[107] Benhabib, 111.

Arendt begins to develop her image of the basis of world constitution, the web of intersubjective relationships, and the basis of the transition from guilt and thrownness to action, in response to the limits of the Heideggerian image of the isolated authentic Dasein. As Villa puts it, "The ironic and supremely *un*-Heideggerian result is that authentic disclosedness is 'localized' or domiciled in a realm of opinion and talk."[108] Heidegger posits the most promising disclosive and authentic activity as the solitary poetic and creative activity that uncovers the truth of Being that has been concealed by the idle talk of the public realm, rather than as doxatic political action within the public realm. He presents a dialectic between authentic disclosure of the singular poet, thinker, or statesman versus the inauthentic opinion and praxis of the many.[109] In contrast to Heidegger's monological and elitist concept of the singular creative figure, Arendt's actor appears as a representative of humanity. In her later writing, Arendt limits the *agon* and incorporates within the actor's resoluteness the element of responsibility toward the world, most especially through her Kantian theory of judgment, which we will explore in chapter four. But Arendt's critique of a resolute and authentic Dasein with little sense of responsibility toward the world is already explicit in her earliest readings of Heidegger. The following is an excerpt from a 1948 article by Arendt, now translated as "What is Existential Philosophy?":

> This ideal of the Self follows as a consequence of Heidegger's making of man what God was in earlier ontology. A being of this highest order is conceivable only as single and unique and knowing no equals. What Heidegger consequently designates as the "fall" includes all those modes of human existence in which man is not God but lives together with his own kind in the world. [...] What emerges from this absolute isolation is a concept of the Self as the total opposite of man. If since Kant the essence of man consisted in every single human being

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[108] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 140.
[109] Ibid., 154.

> representing all of humanity and if since the French Revolution and the declaration of the rights of man it became integral to the concept of man that all of humanity could be debased or exalted in every individual, then the concept of Self is a concept of man that leaves the individual existing independent of humanity and representative of no one but himself – of nothing but his own nothingness. If Kant's categorical imperative insisted that every human act had to bear responsibility for all of humanity, then the experience of guilty nothingness insists on precisely the opposite: the destruction in every individual of the presence of all humanity. The Self in the form of conscience has taken the place of humanity, and being-a-Self has taken the place of being human.[110]

Taminiaux reads Arendt's entire theory of disclosive political action as consistent with this early article, as a sustained response to Heidegger's transformation of Aristotelian *praxis* to a conception of an authentic mode of seeing for Dasein. He notes that both Aristotle's *praxis* and Heidegger's ownmost mode of being of Dasein consist in a care of oneself and an activity for the sake of itself. But after Heidegger's re-appropriation, *phronesis* is no longer the judgment of private and public matters, but a solipsistic resoluteness, Dasein taking upon itself what it is already, assuming its ownmost potentiality-for-being. For Heidegger, individuation occurs through Dasein's silent, internal, and solitary confrontation with nothingness, with its own mortality, and as a knowing of or answer to the call of conscience, *Gewissen*. This conception of individuation is counter to expression and communication, the sharing of words and deeds: "[I]t is not in facing another that the individual declares who he or she is, but only in a face to face with oneself in the solitude of one's conscience, in a fundamental absence of relations."[111] The world in Heidegger's account is not held in common by variously positioned *doxai*, but is "revealed only by the encounter with nothingness experienced through anxiety by a radically isolated existing being."[112] This extracts many aspects of Aristotelian *phronesis*, the necessity of plurality, the regard for others, exercise of virtue in public, and doxatic excellence in rendering a valid opinion.

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[110] Arendt, "What is Existential Philosophy?" in *Essays in Understanding*, 180-81. Translated by Robert and Rita Kimber. This article was published in German as "Was ist Existenz-Philosophie?" in *Sechs Essays*, Heidelberg, 1948.
[111] Taminiaux, 34.

Thus, Heidegger is more like Plato than Aristotle in his solipsism, promoting the excellence of the solitary philosopher, whose job it is to unveil "the Being of beings in their totality,"[113] the task of metaphysics. Following Book X of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Heidegger ends up placing *sophia* and the contemplative life higher on the scale than *phronesis*, because through it Dasein has the possibility of *athanazein*, immortality. For Heidegger – who never questions Plato's identification of *bios theoretikos*, the understanding of Being, as the highest life, above *bios politikos* and *doxa* – these other forms of life are a sign of Dasein's fallenness. Arendt sees in Heidegger the philosopher's hostility to the *polis*, to public opinion as opposed to the authentic self. From his perspective, the public realm only conceals the truth. Only by withdrawing from the world does authentic Dasein individuate itself.

Taminiaux traces Heidegger's notion of authenticity as a unique mode of seeing, removed from the fallen sphere of the *They*, to his distinction between a symbolic order of *logos* and an intuitive order of noetic vision, a distinction following Husserl. While Heidegger's notion of authentic Dasein is a purifying of any symbolizing, Arendt's retrospective narration of the *who* opens up to "unlimited symbolizing."[114] As we will see in chapter four, the promise of unlimited symbolizing is held by Kant's aesthetical ideas, part of why Arendt turns to Kant in her theory of the spectator's judgment and narrative accounting of the actor's deeds. Husserl distinguishes between referring, the function of the index and symbol, which indicate a relationship between an indicator and something indicated, and signification, which is "putting in view that at which it aims."[115] Following Husserl's distinction, Heidegger delineates the phenomenon from the mediateness of the symbolic, or indirect representation. According to Heidegger, while *semantic logos* shows something understandable, only *apophantic logos* shows something from within itself, lets something be seen by pointing it out, unveils that about which it speaks. Heidegger's first distinction between Dasein's everyday comportment versus his authentic way of being corresponds to his second distinction between the symbolic and the intuitive. Taminiaux writes:

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[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid., 41.
[114] Ibid., 87.

> [S]emblance is the privative modification of the phenomenon in the ownmost sense inasmuch as it is embroiled with the mediating order of signs. [...] In its everydayness *Dasein* falls into the realm of semblance with respect to its ownmost phenomenality inasmuch as it is concerned with signs.[116]

Thus, l*ogos* stands in a second position of the disclosure of Being, compared to speechless noetic vision, the intuitive order. For the most part, the sign is merely a tool ready-to-hand, a *zuhanden* entity, for *Dasein*'s concernful production: "But since each given functional involvement is cut out from within the totality of functional involvements, it is this totality–in which each everyday *Dasein* is inscribed–that the sign indicates *a priori*."[117] Pure *noein*, intuitive seeing, is the perception of the simplest determinate ways of Being that entities possess and is the purest and most primordial kind of truth. Being, as the surplus with respect to the given properties of entities and situations, is available to intuition. Intuition sees that which an intentional act reveals, while transcendence is the understanding of the surplus or excess Being of beings. So, according to Heidegger, the authentic self should be approached by means of the intuitive order, not the symbolic one. *Logos* is "purified of any communication whatsoever, of any expression, even of any monologue, so as to be collected in the silent hearing of a call with no other referent, no other caller, no other aim than the *Selbst.*"[118]

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[115] Ibid., 60.
[116] Ibid., 66.
[117] Ibid., 67.

Contrarily, for Arendt, the *who* is revealed to others through speech and deed, in a context of plurality, and its immortality depends on retrospective narrative, a concretization of fragile and fleeting action through stories whose exemplary order can be interpretively expanded in the future. Arendt responds by bringing *praxis* and individuation back to the realm of public, discursive relations. One's presentation to others in the realm of appearance consists of the presentation of a valid *doxa*, the foundation of Jasper's valid personality. *Doxa* is how the world opens up to the subject, so that by disclosing one's *doxa*, the *who* also discloses a valid perspective on the *world*. Arendt writes in her *laudatio* to Jaspers that world-disclosive action and its judgment, through the appearance of the *valid personality*, makes the public realm a spiritual realm, the space in which transcendent Being may be disclosed, the meaning of phenomenal appearances.

Michael Gendre, a translator of Taminiaux and an Arendtian commentator, notes that because Heidegger's Dasein is permeated with negativity, or structural transcendence, it can disclose aspects of other beings. This transcendence, or the ontological difference between Being and beings, is the ground of Dasein's truth disclosure.[119] For Arendt, the disclosure of transcendence, its "vindication,"[120] occurs not through noetic seeing, but rather through action and judgment within the phenomenal world, the actor's introduction of the new into the world and the spectator's affirmation or refusal of appearances according to a standard of which the appearance is exemplary, a gesture that, as Gendre suggests, secures the link between immersion within the phenomenal realm and the withdrawal into thinking, the link between appearance and Being. We may conclude that identifying or engendering an act's meaning – as well as recognizing the *who* – requires that the spectator see, behind the shoulder of the actor, the Being in excess of the actor's social functions, his categorical properties (*whats*), or the ways in which his act fits into a context of concernful production, a situation intelligible only by its means and ends. We may interpret the *who* as the Being of the actor in surplus of the properties of the actor as an entity.

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[118] Ibid., 76.

Technological Enframing as the Modern Mode of Disclosure

Much of Arendt's work, particularly in *The Human Condition*, draws out the political implications of Heidegger's notions of *Gestell* (technological enframing) and the modern *Weltbild* (modern world picture). As we shall see in the next chapter, this work is also carried out in a critical engagement with Marx, particularly through Arendt's description of the logic of *animal laborans* and *homo faber*. Arendt sees modern technology as assimilating human existence into nature. What the modern predominance of the logic of *techne* threatens is not so much a notion of an authentic and natural human being, represented in Rousseau's natural man, for instance, but rather the durability and integrity of the human artifice, the world that is constructed and acted within in an individuating and immortalizing resistance to the endless, anonymous cycles of nature.

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[119] Gendre, "Transcendence and Judgment in Arendt's Phenomenology of Action," 31.
[120] Ibid., 32.

Contrary to what Heidegger calls the instrumental and anthropological definitions of technology, which posit technology as human activity undertaken as means to ends, particularly through the use of equipment, Heidegger conceives technology as a particular form of disclosure. Technology's root word is *techne*, which is also the mode of disclosure of *poiesis*. Modern technology surely is a revealing, but one that is different from the bringing-forth of *poiesis*. It is rather a *challenging*, which Heidegger calls *Gestell* (*enframing*), a demand to nature to yield energy that can be extracted and stored as standing-reserve. The logic of this challenging is to unlock the maximum yield of energy for production and consumption, at minimum expense through an ordering of nature. It is a particular type of disclosure of Being, one that reveals the real only as standing-reserve. At the heart of *enframing* is the practice of modern physics as an exact science, one that shows man's ordering attitude, a mode of representation that entraps nature as a calculable coherence of forces.[121]

Heidegger sees the chief danger of this mode of disclosure as its turning man himself into standing reserve. In his reading of Heidegger, Hubert L.

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[121] Heidegger, *Question Concerning Technology*, 14-21.

Dreyfus proposes that technology is characterized by seeing our situation as one that poses a problem that must be solved by appropriate action. The danger is that calculation becomes the primary way of thinking, so that man orders everything to achieve more flexibility and efficiency for their own sake. Means become ends. By this perspective, even humans become standing-reserve, or useful resources, so that ultimate goals make no sense. The only goal becomes the full development and use of capacities. Dreyfus reminds us that Heidegger thinks the perfectly ordered society, dedicated to the welfare of all, is the culmination of the technological understanding.[122]

This mode of disclosure turns man into an orderer and regulator of standing-reserve, which blocks out the notion of truth as *aletheia*. Man orders under the illusion that he is lord of the earth, that he encounters only himself, or encounters what he has constructed as an extension of himself, out of the standing-reserve of nature. Heidegger holds that the will to mastery becomes more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control. Contrary to the orderer's illusion that he is master and maker who meets himself everywhere he looks, in the midst of what Heidegger calls *objectlessness*, he actually meets himself nowhere. More precisely, nowhere does he meet himself as free, precisely because his freedom lies in his ecstatic responsibility to disclose Being. In his attempt to establish the solid ground for his own existence, man becomes fixed as a laboring animal whose disclosive character is threatened.[123]

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[122] Dreyfus, "Heidegger on the Connection Between Nihilism, Art, Technology, and Politics," 360-62.

[123] Heidegger, *Question Concerning Technology*, 5, 27-28.

Closely related to the disclosive mode of *Gestell* is Heidegger's subjectification thesis put forward in "The Age of the World Picture." This thesis is further developed in Arendt's theory of a twofold retreat from the world to the universal Archimedian point and from the world into the interior of the self. Both writers see the will to metaphysically ground thought and action as underlying this retreat. Villa points out that the real problem for Arendt and Heidegger is the existential *resentment* of guilt, finitude, and groundlessness driving modern humanity to take itself out of the world and to ascribe itself a position from which the world can be exploited. Both see the total humanization of reality as the most extreme form of alienation.[124] Heidegger writes that in modernity, contrary to the ancient and medieval ages, man creates its own *Weltbild*, or world picture:

> Now for the first time is there any such thing as a "position" of man. Man makes depend upon himself the way in which he must take his stand in relation to whatever is as the objective. There begins that way of being human which mans the realm of human capability as a domain given over to measuring and executing, for the purpose of gaining mastery over that which is as a whole. [...] That the world becomes picture is one and the same event with the event of man's becoming *subiectum* in the midst of that which is.[125]

Heidegger explains how man conceived as a *subiectum*, the grounding *ego* of Cartesian metaphysics, implies being the self-supported foundation of truth and certainty: "[A] particular *sub-iectum* (*hypo-keimenon*), is something lying before from out of itself, which, as such, simultaneously lies at the foundation of its own fixed qualities and changing circumstances."[126] Heidegger explains that the notion of the human subject as ground for truth originates in the emancipation of man from an obligation to Christian revelational truth and Church doctrine.

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[124] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 192-93.
[125] Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture" in *Question Concerning Technology*, 132.
[126] Ibid., 148.

Heidegger describes that "which is" in the Middle Ages as the *ens creatum* of a personal Creator-God. In modernity, freedom becomes obligation to something self-posited, which can be variously defined as human reason and its law or something mastered and objectified out of unordered chaos: "As *subiectum*, man is the *co-agitatio* of the *ego*. Man founds and confirms himself as the authoritative measure for all standards of measure with which whatever can be accounted as certain…measured off and measured out."[127] Modern representing brings what is present at hand before oneself (the subject), as something standing over against it (as object). The subject relates the object to itself, to the one representing it, "to force it back into this relationship to oneself as the normative realm. Wherever this happens, man 'gets into the picture' in precedence over whatever is."[128]

In her chapter in *The Human Condition* on the means/ends logic of *homo faber*, Arendt explains how Kant posits man as an end in himself to put a stop to the nihilistic logic of instrumentalism where each end slides to a new means. However, she sees this Kantian gesture implying a degradation of the meaning of the world through its focus on the subjectivity of use. Arendt argues that if "man the *user*" is the final measure of the truth and value of the world, then all is mere means, the intrinsic worth and intersubjective intelligibility of the world as in-between is lost.[129] Implied here is that intrinsic worth must be judged not functionally by man the user, which consists of a universalization of the logic of *homo faber*, but aesthetically, or in relation to its capacity to contextualize disclosive action, by man as disinterested spectator. We explore this further in the next two chapters.

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[127] Ibid., 151.
[128] Ibid., 131.
[129] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 136-37.

Chapter Three:

Labor and World-Alienation: Arendt's Response to Marx

One of Hannah Arendt's most powerful propositions is that a society of laborers and consumers fails to disclose *who* its members uniquely are. Arendt comes to this thesis through a complex engagement with the writings of Karl Marx. *The Human Condition* began as a critical study of Marx, undertaken in part to defend the great theorist's ideas to Arendt's teacher, Karl Jaspers. However, the more Arendt read Marx, the more she became convinced that while he cared very much about justice, he cared very little about freedom, as Arendt understood it. There are thus significant differences between Arendt and Marx, in their notions of freedom, the place of material interests in politics, their understandings of revolution, and the relationship between the public and private spheres. The primary purpose of this chapter is to illuminate key elements of Arendt's own project developed through her interpretation of Marx. The series of criticisms that Arendt levies against Marx can be best read from the perspective of Arendt's notion of disclosure of the *who* and the *world*. It is by keeping in mind Arendt's claim that the revealing of the *who* constitutes human dignity that we can best understand her assessment of Marx's critical-normative conception of *socialized humanity*, his labor theory of value, and his role in encouraging modern phenomena that Arendt argues has lowered the capacity for disclosure of the *who* and the *world*. These phenomena include the glorification of labor, the loss of both a distinct public and private space, the devaluation of deeds and objects of worth, and the dominance of instrumental rationality. Arendt identifies contradictions in Marx in a way that propels her own critique of modernity, but it has been charged that she distorts Marx in her interpretation. A secondary purpose of this chapter, then, is to assess the accuracy of Arendt's reading.

The Glorification of Labor and the "Rise of the Social"

In the preface to *The Human Condition*, Arendt writes that because of the modern glorification of labor, humans have lost the capability to narratively disclose the meaning of deeds and the *who* of actors, as well as debate meaningfully about collective ends through discourses that make qualitative distinctions and pose reasons for courses of action that extend beyond biological self-preservation and material self-interest. This form of discursive action requires a shared world, a commonly intelligible set of objects and interpretations in relation to which plural opinions bear meaning. Arendt sees Marx as not only observing capitalism's world-alienating tendencies, but as perpetuating them.

Arendt's main claim against all materialism, Marx included, is that it overlooks the notion that even when humans are concerned with issues of material interest, they disclose themselves as unique actors through speech, so that this speech should not be conceptually relegated to a superfluous ideological superstructure, or seen as inescapably determined by social relations of production and material productive forces.[1]

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[1] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 163.

Arendt insists that the *who*, an *existentiale* or mode of Being, is separate from the *what* of the self, a category in which Arendt includes the person's function in the totality of social production, as well as objects that are the end product of his work. One's position relative to the totality of social production belongs to the *what* because it refers to a universal category of social function and implies normalized standards of human behavior, thus concealing the unique *who.* Further, Arendt holds that the disclosure transcends productive activity – that the object of *poiesis*, what Heidegger refers to as the *ergon*, never discloses its maker in the way immaterial *praxis* discloses its actor, the *who* that is the act's *arche*. Arendt argues that Marx and the modern laboring society, of which he is a spectator, make action, speech, and thought – which to Arendt are the basis for disclosure of the *who* in relation to the *world* – the mere function of material interest.

Arendt argues that in great writers like Marx, contradictions bring us to the core of their work's insights and are caused by the writer's understanding new phenomena against the old tradition, while still using that tradition's conceptual categories.[2] In line with Arendt's usual practice of conceiving the political theorist as a spectator, judge, and storyteller of political acts, she identifies the events of which Marx was a direct spectator, or that still resonated in Europe during Marx's lifetime. Arendt suggests the French and Industrial Revolutions as such events. Both the French and Industrial Revolutions raised labor, previously seen as a lowly activity tied to necessity, to an activity seen not only as the primary source of material productivity, but also as the very expression of man's freedom, the concretization and actualization of his subjective will. What is more, the new freedom was to be realized under previously unheard of conditions of universal equality. Arendt argues that Marx himself saw the contradiction between labor's subjection to necessity and the modern understanding of labor as the source of productive freedom, but "within the framework of the tradition in which Marx always worked, there could hardly be any other outcome than a new twist in deterministic philosophy, which in its old, familiar fashion 'necessarily' sees freedom somehow emerging out of necessity."[3]

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[2] Arendt, "Tradition and the Modern Age," in *Between Past and Future*, 25.

In a course delivered at Cornell University in 1965, Arendt proposes that the modern glorification of labor is Lockean in origin. According to Locke, each man appropriates a piece of God-given earth through another kind of property, his body. Arendt notes: "What is new is to base [property] on laboring and ownership of body – in other words on the very fact of life."[4] Once considered a lowly activity, labor becomes highly valorized as the productive activity, as an instrument of appropriation, and the means to the "sacred duty to stay alive and to propagate the species. All this comes to a conclusion only in Marx."[5] What is forgotten, according to Arendt, is labor's futility, its "recurring monotony,"[6] and that it arises out of necessity. These are all factors counter to her notion of free and disclosive action.

One side of Marx's contradiction is that he conceives man as *animal laborans*, thus positing labor, rather than action and speech, as the realm of activity wherein man expresses himself, distinguishes himself, and actualizes his freedom. In *The German Ideology*, Marx writes: "The first *historical* act of these individuals, the act by which they distinguish themselves from animals is not the fact that they think but the fact that they begin to *produce their means of subsistence.*"[7] Arendt suggests that Marx was not alone in his estimation:

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[3] Arendt, "From Hegel to Marx," in *The Promise of Politics*, 80.
[4] Arendt, "From Machiavelli to Marx," image 22.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., image 24.

> The very reason for the elevation of labor in the modern age was its "productivity," and the seemingly blasphemous notion in Marx that labor (and not God) created man or that labor (and not reason) distinguished man from the other animals was only the most radical and consistent formulation of something upon which the whole modern age was agreed.[8]

On the other hand, Marx posits a laborless, classless, and stateless society as the normative ideal guiding critical, revolutionary *praxis* and the end of history. Labor, as the human's essential activity for self-actualization and emancipation, realizes man's freedom, but also remains tied to natural necessity, the continuous metabolism with nature, essential for the survival of the human species and the individual human specimen. This duality within labor, for Arendt, is a contradiction that distorts the essence of freedom as the actor's world-disclosive, disinterested openness to others in public, freed of concerns tied to the necessity of metabolism with nature. Arendt reads Marx's critical-normative ideal of socialized humanity as entailing a universal freedom from necessity, a classless universalization of the freedom of the Greek citizen. Marx writes: "Not until this stage is reached will self-activity coincide with material life, will individuals become complete individuals. Only then will the *shedding of all natural limitations* be accomplished."[9]

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[7] Marx, "The German Ideology," in *Selected Writings*, 107.
[8] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 76.

Marx saw leisure, in the ancient Greek conception of freedom from not only labor but also from politics, as possible in a classless society, when in Greece, leisure depended on a class-based organization of the overcoming of necessity for the few. What is implied in Marx's socialized humanity is not merely that political action is possible without a state, or without a political sphere separate from the social system of needs, but further, that action is no longer necessary once the state and classes are abolished and once social production is entirely rationalized in the hands of the proletariat. Arendt asks, then, what kind of action, speech, or thought is possible in a fully socialized humanity, when class supposedly disappears and philosophy is finally realized.[10] Both in *The Human Condition* and in her 1955 Berkeley lecture, "History of Political Theory," Arendt specifically cites chapter 48 of *Capital, vol. 3* as an expression of Marx's equivocal sense of labor, necessity, and freedom. In this lecture she writes: "The most glaring contradiction is the always equivocal understanding of Labor: as the Creator of all values and as the realm of Necessity."[11] In *The Human Condition*, the reference appears as a footnote to the following:

> The modern age in general and Karl Marx in particular, overwhelmed, as it were, by the unprecedented actual productivity of Western mankind, had an almost irresistible tendency to look upon labor as work and to speak of the *animal laborans* in terms much more fitting for *homo faber*, hoping all the time that only one more step was needed to eliminate labor and necessity altogether.[12]

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[9] Marx, "German Ideology," 152. My emphasis.
[10] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 24.
[11] Arendt, "History of Political Theory – Tocqueville and Marx," image 8.
[12] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 76-77.

The following is an extract from chapter 48 of *Capital, vol. 3*, which clearly made an impression on Arendt. The footnote from *The Human Condition* includes merely one line, in German, from this longer section of an English translation. The words that Arendt cites are italicized. It is noteworthy that she excludes the middle of the sentence, here underlined, in which Marx specifies *what kind* of labor must cease in order for freedom to begin.

> The actual wealth of society, and the possibility of constantly expanding its reproduction process, therefore, do not depend upon the duration of surplus-labor, but upon its productivity and the more or less copious conditions of production under which it is performed. In fact, *the realm of freedom actually begins only where labor* which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations *ceases*; thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production. Just as the savage must wrestle with Nature to satisfy his wants, to maintain and reproduce life, so must civilised man, and he must do so in all social formations and under all possible modes of production. With his development this realm of physical necessity expands as a result of his wants; but, at the same time, the forces of production which satisfy these wants also increase. Freedom in this field can only consist in socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favorable to, and worthy of, their human nature. But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working-day is its basic prerequisite.[13]

Arendt sees a fallacy in Marx's idea that the increased leisure time of socialized humanity would finally free men of necessity and create the opportunity for the development of higher activities. She writes: "The guiding model of this hope in Marx was doubtless the Athens of Pericles which, in the future, with the help of the vastly increased productivity of human labor, would need not slaves to sustain itself but would become a reality for all."[14] Marx's hope is countered by the increased time that contemporary society spends on mere consumption and "vacant time" spent rejuvenating labor energies. Kenneth Frampton offers insight into the nature of this vacant time:

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[13] Marx, *Capital, vol. 3*, 820.

[14] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 115.

> While Marx, writing just before mass consumption began in earnest, projected the eventual liberation of all mankind from the necessity of remorseless labor, he failed to account for the latent potential of machine production to promote a voracious consumer society [...] In such a society the basic problem is no longer production bur rather the creation of sufficient daily waste to sustain the inexhaustible capacity for consumption.[15]

Arendt adds that increased leisure time through increased labor productivity fails, on its own, to establish a common world, a shared public space of appearance, but tends rather to be filled by private pursuits, which Arendt belittles with the term "hobbies."[16]

Another reason that Arendt cites for Marx's contradiction between labor as necessity and labor as freedom, is Marx's clouding of the distinction between labor and work, a distinction that Arendt decisively draws in *The Human Condition*. She presents labor as born out of necessity, the reproduction of life as mere survival, ending only in death, but leaving no lasting object after its consumption.[17] Work, on the other hand, leaves lasting objects behind, after the process of making, which then become part of the world and reify human deeds for future remembrance. It is work, not labor, that is expressive of man's productivity. Arendt argues that Marx's attempt to raise labor to the world-constitutive position of work was in order to re-interpret labor as the source of man's *making* of history, the establishment of the final end of a classless society. Arendt outlines her critique in a 1967 lecture, "Labor, Work, Action":

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[15] Frampton, "The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects," 119.
[16] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 101.
[17] Ibid., 76.

> [N]ot labor as such occupied this position (Adam Smith, Locke, Marx are unanimous in their contempt for menial tasks, unskilled labor which helps only to consume) but productive labor. Again the standard of lasting results is the actual yardstick. Thus Marx, surely the greatest of the labor philosophers, was constantly trying to re-interpret labor in the image of the working activity – again at the expense of political activity. [...] Political activity was now supposed to "make history" – phrase that occurred for the first time in Vico – and not a commonwealth, and this history had, as we all know, its end-product, the classless society which would be the end of the historical process just as the table is the end of fabrication.[18]

Arendt charges that Marx is so concerned with the process of productive forces, the life process of the human species, that from its perspective, all products of work lose their specific durable quality as worldly, disclosive things, and become devoured as mere functions of the labor and consumption process.[19]

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt categorizes human activities that appear in the phenomenal world and deems these activities to be more authentically practiced, to more fully disclose their *arche*, in particular spatial realms, be it private or public. She traces the spatial realms where historical communities have situated labor, work, and action, the relative importance of these three elements of the *vita activa* through Western history, and the ways in which their authentic practice has given way to distorted forms. Arendt conceives the private realm as concerned with the reproduction of life and the satisfaction of necessity, whereas she conceives the public realm as the proper space of appearance of great deeds and discourses, free from questions of necessity. Arendt's "phenomenological essentialism,"[20] as Benhabib calls it, is one of the most fundamental and controversial aspects of her work, and one that characterizes her critique of Marx.

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[18] Arendt, "Labor, Work, Action," image 3.
[19] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 78, 94.
[20] Benhabib, 123.

Arendt sees Marx as helping to engender what she calls the "rise of the social," a blending of the public and private spheres of activity and the politicization of a new social realm. The fusion of these realms, writes Arendt, is brought about by the rise in capitalist commodity exchange and abstract exchange value, as well as by the normalizing administration of behavior in mass society, according to the ideal of life preservation and the maximization of productivity. Arendt relates that society entered the public realm when wealth accumulating capitalists demanded freedom from the state to accumulate more and when, through the rationalized division of labor, labor was brought from the private home out into the public eye, into supervised factories, where it was publicly organized to maximize productivity. Laboring, mass society became administered according to the end of the preservation and expansion of life force, so that private care for the life-process became a public concern.[21] Under this arrangement, the accumulation of wealth is perceived as limitless, since the subject of labor is the collective labor force, extending past the limits of individual life spans. A significant factor preventing individuating disclosures is that from the perspective of the collective labor force, the individual is seen as an exchangeable *specimen* of the entire species, all qualitatively unique activities are leveled as the expression of abstract labor power, while all work is judged according to its social function, its contribution to the reproduction of the life-process in general: "What was left was a 'natural force,' the force of the life process itself, to which all men and all human activities were equally submitted...and whose only aim, if it had any aim at all, was survival of the animal species man."[22] The notion of *species being* absorbs individuated lives into the collective life process of mankind, one that follows the necessity of natural fertility, the multiplication of lives and the consumption of goods to sustain it. Pitkin suggests that Arendt sees in Marx's naturalism a conception of humans as just one kind of animal species among others, rather than drawing the sharp Kantian line between "causally determined nature and human freedom."[23] Canovan, who insists that the significance of Arendt's theories are inseparable from her early critique of totalitarianism, stresses that for Arendt, the significance of the Nazi camps was that they showed totalitarianism as an attempt to turn human beings into mere specimens, depriving them of individuality and the capacity for spontaneous action.[24] For Arendt, humanity is not merely predicated by a natural belonging to one's species, but rather by one's uniqueness among the plurality of individuals, each capable of "superimposing upon nature a human-built world."[25]

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[21] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 43-44, 60.

According to Arendt, labor is antipolitical in that laboring man is "neither together with the world nor with other people, but alone with his body."[26] Arendt means that the form of togetherness in which labor is undertaken lacks true plurality, but instead "exists in the multiplication of specimens which are fundamentally all alike because they are what they are as mere living organisms."[27] For Arendt, the sameness and conformity that marks the form of togetherness of a laboring society lacks the plurality of a togetherness in which the professional identity of equal but distinct craftsmen can be recognized. This sameness prevails in this society's social organization of the labor process, right down to the individual laborer's somatic experience during the process of production, "where the biological rhythm of labor unites the group of laborers to the point that each may feel that he is no longer an individual but actually one with all others."[28] Under these social conditions, the laborer loses his identity, despite the comfort afforded through enduring labor together with other laborers. Labor, according to Arendt's understanding, can never be the source of freedom, and is incapable of disclosing a unique actor, since it is the activity forever binding humans to their necessary metabolism with nature, an experience that is irreducibly bound to the interiority of one's bodily experience: "Nothing, in fact, is less common and less communicable, and therefore more securely shielded against the visibility and audibility of the public realm, than what goes on within the confines of the body, its pleasures and its pains, its laboring and consuming."[29]

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[22] Ibid., 293-94.
[23] Pitkin, *The Attack of the Blob*, 132.
[24] Canovan, 25.
[25] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 25.
[26] Ibid., 191.
[27] Ibid.

Arendt argues that Marx finally encourages the rise of the social through his notion of socialized humanity, calling Marx's notion a *communistic fiction*, where one harmonized interest rules human behavior and where a whole class or, further, all of society, is conceived as an agent abstracted from its irreducible plurality of conflicting cross-purposes, perspectives, and opinions. In a 1955 course at Berkeley, Arendt states that for Marx, action is but a function of material interests whose subject is a corporate person, bearing a single opinion: "Corporate opinions are indeed, as Marx rightly saw, nothing but the expressions of this material interest. They are 'ideological superstructures' the moment they generalize."[30] Regarding the bourgeoisie, "the particular person who happens to be born into this class judges of everything in accordance with his being a bourgeois, his position in society, his accumulation of capital etc."[31] This fiction is not the exclusive invention of Marx, but rather sought to establish in reality the fiction of harmonized interests at the root of earlier liberal economic theory.[32] The logic of the collective interest of life preservation demands the mass normalization of functional and predictable behavior, which excludes spontaneous or unprecedented deeds or discourses that constitute political action, illuminate historical time, and allow for individuation, the disclosure of the *who*. Arendt writes that the institutional form for the politicization of private concerns, the modern nation state, conceives the political community as if it were one enormous family with only one opinion or interest, while the purpose of the public realm becomes the administration of life preservation.[33] The normalization of behavior and the multiplication of a single perspective, something inherent to conceiving political community as a family, threatens the individuating and disclosive potential of a plurality of spectator *doxai*.[34] In the notes of a 1954 lecture, "Philosophy and Politics: the Problem of Action and Thought after the French

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[28] Ibid., 192.
[29] Ibid., 97.

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[30] Arendt, "Tocqueville and Marx," image 6.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 40.
[33] Ibid., 28.
[34] Ibid., 52.

Revolution," we find one of Arendt's most eloquent critiques of Marx, centered on socialized humanity's threat to plurality and action as spontaneous beginning:

> At first glance, this looks as though here for the first time the plurality of man had been consciously taken to be the valid fundament of a future body politic and this impression is enhanced through the fact that the old distinction between the few and the many indeed disappears in favor of a glorification of the multitude. Socialized man is in a sense that man in whom the multitude is constantly present. [...] I can only indicate here why I think that this is an illusion. The Marxian multitude is based on the very opposite of plurality, it is based on the assumption that by nature we are not only endowed with equal strength, but are equal in the sense of similarity. In the future society composed of socialized men, all men are supposed to have become human in the sense that human nature will prevail in each of them. Marx took the term human nature very seriously and quite literally; he conceived of the future legislator as a kind of natural scientist who would discover the laws of human nature and legislate accordingly. It is no accident that when Marx had concretely to define what human nature was he could fall back only upon the animal laborans, upon man's metabolism with nature and on his natural needs. [...] Taken in its philosophical implications, Marx's socialized mankind...would be a real ideocracy in which some idea of the nature of man would rule mercilessly over all men. [...] [M]en would neither act nor speak (except for purposes of communication) nor work in the sense of making themselves at home in the world into which each of us is born as a stranger; they would only function in accordance with their nature. [...] We would have become part and parcel of the natural universe. If we may once more recall Augustine, who said that man was created that a beginning be made...we would have eliminated in ourselves the faculty and the urge to begin [...] Socialized mankind and socialized man might indeed be the end of humanity and the end of man, because it would have organized man in such a way, that it would no longer matter that any men are born into it, they would not be "beginnings" but only the most recent specimens of an old species.[35]

The rise of the social, as the blending of the private and public, of necessity and freedom, is the dominance of the logic of naturalization and necessity in matters in which agency can in fact be exerted, choices can be made, freedom and action can appear. Pitkin writes: "Despite all of Arendt's talk about necessity, nature, and process, the real issue is their simulacra: false necessity, spurious naturalization, pretended inevitability, self-imposed helplessness."[36] Arendt accuses the social realm, and Marx himself, of failing to make the public space necessary to act spontaneously, begin unique processes, or discursively debate issues common to all. These elements of action disclose *who* the actor is, both in the principle performed when he acts, and in the performative attunement the actor shows to the political situation. Pitkin notes how Arendt charges Marx with making abstractions that distort action, ascribing "intentions and initiative to abstractions such as the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, to the human species,"[37] and to society as a collective subject, the basis of the communistic fiction. Pitkin notes, however, that Marx himself criticized this very gesture of abstraction, in his theory of commodity fetishism and critique of the reification of social relationships. At some moments, it is as though Arendt sets up a strawman Marx, who she then tears apart using some of Marx's own categories of critique.

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[35] Arendt, "Philosophy and Politics: the Problem of Action and Thought after the French Revolution," image 18-19.

[36] Pitkin, 192.

Private Space and Private Property

For Arendt, a distinct, protected private space is important for many reasons related to the proper disclosure of the *who*. Arendt notes that the ancient Greeks preserved a private realm that was sacred, unscrutinized by the public eye, for the reason that without a place of one's own, one could not participate in worldly affairs. Thus, a protected private space is integral to a strong public space. Arendt sees property as one's private location in the world, where one can tend to life's necessities, share in the intimate aspects of life, and spend the necessary time away from the scrutinizing glare of the public. Private property is necessary for psychic balance and integrity, for the proper development of individuality, and to give depth of meaning to one's subsequent appearance in public:

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[37] Ibid., 233.

> A life spent entirely in public, in the presence of others, becomes, as we would say, shallow. While it retains its visibility, it loses the quality of rising into sight from some darker ground which must remain hidden if it is not to lose its depth in a very real, non-subjective sense. The only efficient way to guarantee the darkness of what needs to be hidden against the light of publicity is private property, a privately owned place to hide in.[38]

Arendt is careful to distinguish private property from accumulated wealth, productive forces, or consumption power. She criticizes Marx for his ideal of socialization of the accumulation process, which she sees as invading property and privacy. Arendt sees socialized humanity as a form of universal expropriation causing world alienation, a set of phenomena explored in a further section of this chapter. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx calls for the abolition of landed property and the application of rents to "public purposes" as well as the abolition of all right of inheritance.[39] Arendt describes expropriation as the deprivation of certain groups of their place in the world and a "naked exposure to the exigencies of life."[40] This expropriation consists, in part, of the transformation of private property into accumulated wealth, or capital. This process of expropriation and wealth accumulation occurs in what Marx calls the "life process of society" which can only endure, according to Arendt, "as long as all worldly things, all end products of the production process, are fed back into it at an ever-increasing speed."[41] As what Arendt calls the first stage of world alienation, this expropriation deprives the laboring poor of family-owned private shares of the world, which "until the modern age had housed the individual life process and the laboring activity subject to its necessities."[42] The second stage of world alienation is when society becomes the subject of the life process, as family had been before, where membership in a social class replaces membership in a family, so that the tangible property identified with the family becomes the territory of the nation-state. Thus, "homogeneity of the population and its rootedness in the soil of a given territory becomes the requisites for the nation-state everywhere."[43] This new form of collective ownership, a contradiction in terms to Arendt, cannot stop the process of expropriation and world alienation. The third and last stage of world alienation is the decline of the nation-state, the economic and geographic shrinkage of the earth, and the rise of the image of all mankind as the locus of collective membership. This universal form of collective membership is dangerous both to the private and public dimensions of the person:

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[38] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 63.
[39] Marx, "The Communist Manifesto," in *Selected Writings*, 175-76.
[40] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 231.
[41] Ibid., 232.

> For men cannot become citizens of the world as they are citizens of their countries, and social men cannot own collectively as family and household men own their private property. The rise of society brought about the simultaneous decline of the public as well as the private realm. But the eclipse of a common public world, so crucial to the formation of the lonely mass man and so dangerous in the formation of the worldless mentality of modern ideological mass movements, began with the much more tangible loss of a privately owned share of the world.[44]

Public Space and Public *Persona*

Arendt is highly critical of Marx's classless and stateless image of socialized humanity for its lack of protection and recognition of the legal rights of the citizen, as well as for its threat to a constitutionally protected public space in which public *personas* may appear and in which political communities based on action and depersonalized exchange of spectator opinion may emerge.

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 233.
[44] Ibid.

In *On the Jewish Question*, Marx sees equal political or legal rights, protected by the modern state, as an abstraction from exploitative relations of production, an abstraction that normalizes and legitimizes these unequal relations:

> The state abolishes distinctions of *birth, rank, education,* and *occupation* in its fashion when it declares them to be *non-political* distinctions, when it proclaims that every member of the community *equally* participates in popular sovereignty without regard to these distinctions, and when it deals with all elements of the actual life of the nation from the standpoint of the state. [...] In the *political community* he regards himself as a *communal being*; but in *civil society* he is active as a *private individual*, treats other men as means, reduces himself to a means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers.[45]

In a move influenced by Feuerbach, Marx likens the abstract legal and political citizen, an abstraction worshipped by modern bourgeois society as representing the highest rational capacities of the human, to the transvaluated image of a personified God. Both abstractions are made, argues Marx, because man's potential freedom and development of capacities are frustrated under the exploitative relations determining material production. He sees political power as merely the "organised power of one class for oppressing another"[46] and so he calls for not merely *political* emancipation, but *human* emancipation. For Marx, it is where material production takes place, rather than the political state of the legal citizen, that is the proper realm of freedom. In *The German Ideology* Marx writes:

> Only in community do the means exist for every individual to cultivate his talents in all directions. Only in the community is personal freedom possible. In previous substitutes for the community, in the state, etc., personal freedom has existed only for the individuals who developed within the ruling class and only

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[45] Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in *Selected Writings*, 8-9.

[46] Marx, "Communist Manifesto," 176.

> insofar as they belonged to this class. The illusory community, in which individuals have come together up till now, always took on an independent existence in relation to them and was at the same time not only a completely illusory community but also a new fetter because it was the combination of one class against another. In a real community individuals obtained their freedom in and through their association.[47]

Conversely, Arendt emphasizes the importance of an integral public sphere that transcends material interests, and secures a theatre of appearance for the legal and political personalities of actors. Arendt reverses Marx's notion that the citizen is a merely abstract and illusory bearer of universality and freedom, while the concrete, material individual, working within the sphere that Hegel calls "civil society," the realm of fulfillment of interconnected needs, may realize full, human emancipation, once this system of needs fulfillment is rationally administered through social cooperation. Arendt posits the political citizen, free of the demands of necessity, as the freest actor and recipient of public recognition. For Marx, freedom is conceived as cultivating talents in all directions in a classless community. Arendt, however, excludes talents as elements of the *who* to be disclosed in action. One effect of this exclusion is that it distinguishes her notion of political freedom from what Marx deems as possible and desirable under communism, or socialized humanity. Under Marx's communism, human talents may be fully cultivated and, presumably, may appear to others as belonging to the individual as a social being, rather than as part of a given class, or as means to another's exploitation of productive forces. There is an underlying ethic of recognition in Marx's communism, though it is different from Arendt's. Authentic recognition is based on overcoming class. It is similar to Arendt's in that it requires "togetherness," an overcoming of particular interest, an overcoming of "being for or against someone." For Marx, "being for or against" would mean seeing the other as either useful or as a fetter to one's own class-determined interests, because of their own class position in the totality of social production. His form of togetherness, necessary for non-alienated labor, consists in the overcoming of this class conditionality. For Arendt, it is as though classes are as unavoidable as labor itself, so that instead of overcoming it, what humanity can hope for in its politics is to transcend its sphere, which she posits as the private one, in order to establish a separate sphere of recognition, of disclosure, and of "togetherness," no matter what class one belongs to. In this regard, Arendt's is a conservative stance in that it does not posit freedom in the abolishing of class. One might find a parallel to Arendt's position in Hegel's positing of a universal sphere of political freedom, the sphere of citizenship, above the sphere of civil society, as the class-based system of material needs.

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[47] Marx, "German Ideology," 144.

In *On Revolution*, Arendt offers an account of public, legal personality through the Roman legal metaphor of the theatrical *persona.* We recall from the last chapter that Heidegger establishes that *aletheia*, the unconcealment of being, rests on a simultaneous concealment. This idea, as we saw in chapter one, comes to bear on Arendt's concept of *persona,* a mask that conceals the natural face of the actor, but lets his voice through, amplified by the sound hole.[48] This mask reflects the abstract legal and political personality necessary for the public recognition of rights. Without this legal mask, it is the natural ego or biological human that appears before the law, without rights and duties recognized by the body politic. Without the mask, the only rights one can appeal to must be conceived as pre-political, natural rights. Arendt suggests that under totalitarian rule, domination is achieved first through the killing of the juridical person, in part through arbitrary arrest, which introduces consequences unconnected to the free consent to one's actions.[49] One's juridical status, one's legal rights, makes predictability of treatment possible, a rational connection between one's actions and consequence, and so one's responsibility.

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[48] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 106.

The mask also acts as a symbol of a publicly recognized and stylized role that provides intelligible context and amplification for performative utterances, a sort of sounding board or site of articulation. In *On Revolution*, Arendt cites both Socrates and Machiavelli as seeing a specifically public *persona* as a discloser of public truth.[50] It is only with Rousseau and the French Revolution that playacting became seen primarily as deceitful or hypocritical. Hypocrisy is the main vice for both Robespierre and Rousseau, who celebrate the expressivist and Romantic ideal of moral sincerity and the conception of man as natural, authentic, and holistic, where any possible division between public and private is extinguished.

Villa argues that the distinction of a properly public personality focuses on the central role of impersonality and self-distance in preserving a genuinely agonistic ethos in politics, one of moral seriousness, independent thought, and informed exchange of opinion, rather than immediate self-interest.[51] The presentation of a *persona* requires "discipline, stylization, and conventionality assumed by the virtuosic political actor."[52] This form of disclosure is not a revealing of an essence internal to the private actor, but rather, it is an intersubjective exchange of interpretations of aspects of the shared world. Villa relates Sennett's espousal of a depersonalized public space, where shared conventions govern the presentation of self to strangers, thus enabling an impersonal sociability, an opening of a communicative space by creating a distance between the actor and his acts. Spectator judgment focuses on the act itself, rather than on the private person behind the mask, so that the spectator can censure an act or opinion without demonizing the private individual.[53] A public sphere based on impersonality and conventionality, a *theatrum mundi* of mask wearing, allows actors to be judged by criteria appropriate to their public role.[54] According to Villa, this permits an exchange of opinion that avoids a slide to Carl Schmitt's friend/enemy distinction.[55] Politics may be raised to the level of opinion exchange, over mere conflict between group identities, thus encouraging the state of disinterested togetherness that Arendt sees as essential to truthful disclosure. Conflict is sublimated to the theatrical, performative realm, and the artificial world is protected from its destructive side, by the disinterested distance that representational judgment requires. Villa argues that discourses on community and intimate belonging fail in raising particular interests to common interests, but rather foster an "affinity group culture, inclined to view moral-political virtues as a function of 'who one is' in the most rudimentary sense."[56] The more we personalize the political, the less we can distinguish words, acts, and opinions from a person's nature, character, and identity. Arendt posits the world stage and theatricality, as opposed to an organic community, as the space for authentic action or redemption of human dignity. Villa writes that "to be *worldly* in Arendt's sense is to inscribe a certain modality of alienation at the heart of one's existence, and to give this alienation an extremely positive valorization."[57]

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[49] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 451.
[50] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 101-02.
[51] Villa, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror*, 118.

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[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 148.
[54] Ibid., 119. See Sennett, *Fall of Public Man*.
[55] Ibid., 123.

The recognition of this mask depends on a stable public realm guaranteed by law, whose stability Arendt sees as impossible under Marx's own notion of law:

> The only law Marx knows as a positive, nonideological force is the law of history, whose role within the political realm, however, is primarily antilegal; it makes its force felt by exploding the legal systems, by abolishing the old order...What is significant in our context is that this law can never be used in order to establish the public realm... Traditionally, laws are stabilizing factors in society, whereas here law indicates the predictable and scientifically observable movement in history as it develops. From this new concept of law, no code of legal prescriptions, which is to say no positive, posited laws, can ever be deduced, because it necessarily lacks stability and in itself is nothing but the indication and exponent of motion.[58]

Canovan reiterates that since Marx understood rulership as the tyranny of the dominant class that resists the revolutionary movement of the progressive class, government appears to him as an impediment to the expansion of forces of production. She relates how this "devaluation of political structures and laws" made it easier for subsequent totalitarian terror, with the disappearance of public space available to citizens.[59] In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt argues that under totalitarian government, the place of positive law is taken by terror, which "translates into reality the law of movement of history or nature,"[60] a notion we will more deeply examine in chapter five, in the context of Arendt's critique of modern philosophies of history.

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[56] Ibid., 153.
[57] Ibid., 203.
[58] Arendt, "The End of Tradition," in *The Promise of Politics*, 88.
[59] Canovan, 89.

World-Alienation

Arendt criticizes Marx for further encouraging a phenomenon of world alienation, the flight from a state of attunement, love, and care for a shared world – where reality and meaning can be intersubjectively constructed – into the interiority of the self. In the Arendtian notion of worldliness, mankind's dignity, based on the doing and remembrance of great deeds, as well as all measures of meaning and intelligibility, depend on the continued re-creation and care for a shared human-made artifice, comprised of material objects, art works, and texts. This is the theatre that stages performative acts. As we saw earlier, Arendt posits that humans retrieve their self-sameness by relating to the stabilizing objects of an objective world, rather than by an indifferent nature whose "overwhelming elementary force...compel[s] them to swing restlessly in the circle of their own biological movement."[61] For one's identity to be retrieved, these objects must bear meaning and disclosive power, an objectivity, durability, or validity that withstands the human's continuous needs, wants, and consumption, aspects of the human that Arendt conceives as part of nature's eternal movement. Arendt understands culture as those things in the world that outlast the generations and survive the biological urge to consume or destroy. She cites that the term *culture* comes from the Roman *colere*, which implies "tending to" and "taking care of" places and things with an attitude for preserving monuments of the past, or "residing in" a place made and kept fit for habitation.[62] While disclosure of the *who* transcends material objects, the disclosure cannot take place without the frame of meaning supplied by a materially constructed world of things.

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[60] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 464.
[61] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 120.

According to Arendt, such a world of things is the work of *homo faber*. She writes that while "fabrication with its instrumentality is capable of building a world, this same world becomes...a mere means for further ends, if the standards which governed its coming into being are permitted to rule it after its establishment."[63] Thus, the means-ends logic of *homo faber*, necessary for working on material according to the end of constructing a piece of the world of things, must not subsequently rule the valuation of this world if it is to survive and serve as the frame of reference for judging the meaning of acts and deeds that it houses. If values are perceived as merely useful or exchangeable commodities, one set may be easily traded for another, with little sense of consumer attachment. For Arendt, this meant that Hitler could seduce large portions of the German populace with a new set of "useful" values, which the population would later readily exchange anew after Hitler's defeat.

According to Arendt, the preservation and judgment of cultural works and political acts can only take place with an attitude that judges their worth disinterestedly. To judge disinterestedly means to judge the work by measures intrinsic to the work or deed itself, such as beauty, or its capacity to disclose meaning, rather than by its functionality or use value. Gaining distance from one's immediate interest in the process of judgment is achieved in a manner articulated through Arendt's analysis of Kant's reflective, aesthetic judgment. We examine this mode of judgment in the next chapter.

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[62] Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," in *Between Past and Future*, 210.
[63] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 137.

Arendt characterizes modern world alienation as where man meets only himself as the source of meaning of acts and things. In Arendt's seminar on Marx offered in 1966 at the University of Chicago, she argues that the positing of the subject and his labor as the only source of value – a premise basic to Marx's socialized humanity – presupposes that the subject exists in a self-transparent relationship with himself: "To make the world philosophical would mean to make it a world where man meets nothing but his own self in some outward manifestation; the whole world would be a kind of self-realization. The premise, of course, is that I know who I am and what man is."[64]

The modern esteem for *homo faber* was ultimately surpassed through an elevation of *animal laborans* to the highest position in the hierarchy of the *vita activa*. This, argues Arendt, occurred through a change in mentality within *homo faber* itself, a new emphasis on process, on how production takes place, rather than the nature of what is produced. This change "deprived man as maker and builder of those fixed and permanent standards and measurements which, prior to the modern age, have always served him as guides for his doing and criteria for his judgment."[65] The main cause of this, in addition to the predominance of exchange value over use value in commercial society, is the relativization and devaluation of all values. The disclosive power of objects is lost if its mode of being is limited to its relative usefulness in a further context, or to its market-determined exchange value. Arendt sees the process of wealth accumulation, mass production, and mass consumption as undermining the permanence of the world, constituted in part by the particular worth of durable and unique, inexchangeable objects. Under capital accumulation, objects are seen in their abstract exchange value and the source of value is labor power, so that both the particular human person and his property are absolutely mobile and replaceable and can no longer stand as solid references that bestow permanence and intelligibility to the world.[66] The mere consumption of cultural goods as entertainment with exchangeable value is further heightened with increased vacant time, the time needed for the passive rejuvenation of labor power. Society overcomes any limit to consumption by treating objects as consumer goods:

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[64] Arendt, "Marx, Karl," image 36.

[65] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 280.

> In our need for more and more rapid replacement of the worldly things around us, we can no longer afford to use them, to respect and preserve their inherent durability; we must consume, devour, as it were, our houses and furniture and cars as though they were the "good things" of nature which spoil uselessly if they are not drawn swiftly into the never-ending cycle of man's metabolism with nature.[67]

Arendt's major attack on modernity, according to Ricoeur, is the replacement of work with labor, the enduring with the ephemeral. We project the permanence of the products of work onto the products of labor when we perceive the products of labor as an abundant totality of capital accumulation, while the products of work, treated as consumables, are "brought back to the futility of life."[68] Ricoeur adds that only when the distinction between use and consumption is preserved is the proper tragic meaning of mortality disclosed: "[T]o be born is to gain access to a world of durability instead of merely to come into the midst of the deathless repetition of nature; and to die is to recede, to pass out of a durable world."[69]

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[66] Ibid., 61.
[67] Ibid., 109-10.
[68] Ricoeur, "Action, Story, and History," 153.

It has been charged that Arendt seriously underestimates the world-constitutive dimensions of Marx's notion of labor. Bhikhu Parekh argues that Marx does not view labor as merely a natural exertion of bodily energy, but as a purposive and planned activity in which man activates his rational powers to transform nature and develop his capacities.[70] Part of the issue may be etymological. Pitkin notes that the range of words in the *Werk* family in modern German is restricted, so Marx used *Arbeit* in a way that implied both work and labor. Thus, for Arendt to argue that Marx conceives the primary activity of man as labor in a way that neglects man's world-building capacity through the making of lasting objects is to misread Marx.[71] After all, much of Arendt's own critique of the loss of intrinsic meaning of things, beyond use or exchange, is inspired by Marx himself. In "Private Property and Communism," from the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844, Marx describes how one's senses are not ready to judge or create works according to standards of beauty until they can reach a certain distance from objects that is not determined by an immediate relation of needs satisfaction.[72] The young Marx tried to restore to labor the world-constitutive and transforming power of work, theorized by Hegel, and criticized social relations of capitalism for having lost it. He saw the self-alienating relations of capitalist civil society as distorting the work process by which one might authentically express one's self through what one makes. In "Alienated Labor," also from the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Marx describes the laborer in capitalism as facing the objects of the world that he has created as standing alien and opposed to him. Implied is a counter image, a critical-normative ideal, of man's non-alienated world-building capacity to create objects through a self-expressive metabolism with nature so that the products of his work, products of humanized nature, can be identified with as his own self-conscious doing. Here, Marx's idea of universal man is presented by his notion of *species-being*, who "practically and theoretically makes his own species as well as that of other things his object...[and] that as present and living species...considers himself to be a *universal* and consequently free being."[73] As with Kant and Hegel, the universality of Marx's conception of man comes from his ability to posit his own self, his life activity, his social relations, and his self-understandings, as objects for his own scrutiny and potential transformation. The early Marx saw man as capable of humanizing nature, making things according to consciously chosen measures available to the maker for his choosing through mental reflection on all of the discovered measures in the natural world, including those of beauty and of the work modes of other species, or according to measures imagined by the maker himself. We may wonder if this process of self-determined creation, the humanizing of nature, entails an engagement with the world, as Arendt understands it.

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[69] Ibid., 154.
[70] Parekh, "Hannah Arendt's Critique of Marx," 85.
[71] Pitkin, 133.
[72] Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts: Private Property and Communism," in *Selected Writings*, 75.

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[73] Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts: Alienated Labor," in *Selected Writings*, 62.

Arendt reads a decisive shift in Marx after the *Communist Manifesto*, and criticizes him for engendering the phenomena of world-alienation, particularly through his labor theory of value. She sees Marx's labor theory of value as the moment in which his unitary concept of labor and work loses the world-constitutive power it held in his earlier writings. Arendt sees Marx's adoption of the labor theory of value as arising from an incompatibility between traditional notions of transcendent measures for thought and action, with modern society's devaluation of these measures into functional values determined by social relationships.[74] Labor time is identified by Marx as the abstract, universal standard of value, a standard that carries a radical nihilism, according to Arendt, a denial of all given, intrinsic worth of thoughts, actions, and natural beings, who must become humanized through labor and exchanged in the market in order to manifest value. Durability, the potential source of its objective, intrinsic worth in a shared world of meaning, is reduced not merely to usefulness, but further, to stored-up exchange value.[75] In this way, the value of man's products, actions, thoughts, and judgments are decided by their position relative to the totality of social production. In the exchange of products of work, the "skills and qualities" of the worker may be recognized, if not the *who* disclosed only in speech.[76] Producers may still retain some basis of distinction. However, when objects of beauty, or interpretive resonance, are seen as mere consumer goods and their processes of making are abstracted from in the form of labor power, the possibility for distinction in making is lost. Arendt writes that the sociability of labor rises rather out of sameness. From this viewpoint of the consumer society, all professional specializations, the basis of distinction, are leveled to the category of labor, all perceived as part of the life-generating process, species-being's metabolism with nature. Arendt writes:

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[74] Arendt, "Tradition and the Modern Age," in *Between Past and Future*, 32.
[75] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 143.
[76] Ibid., 191.

> Obviously, Marx no longer speaks of labor, but of work – with which he is not concerned; and the best proof of this is that the apparently all-important element of "imagination" plays no role whatsoever in his labor theory. In the third volume of *Das Kapital* he repeats that surplus labor beyond immediate needs serves the 'progressive extension of the reproduction process.' Despite occasional hesitations, Marx remained convinced that "Milton produced *Paradise Lost* for the same reason a silk worm produces silk."[77]

Arendt cites this passage from Marx to prove that imagination plays no role in Marx's labor theory of value, and that, despite Marx's occasional expressions of the world-constitutive power of work and his occasional concern for the world-alienating forces of capitalism, Marx finally assimilates world-constitutive work to the same category as the least world-constitutive brand of labor, that concerned merely with the begetting of biological life and that which produces what is most ephemeral and consumable. Arendt claims that while Marx indeed saw capitalism's sin as transforming use value into exchange value, his understanding of use value was not so much intrinsic worth, but its function in the consuming life-process. Arendt extracts the Milton line, found in *Theories of Surplus Value: Volume IV of Capital*, from what is a clear explanation of productive versus unproductive labor, from the perspective of the capitalist production process. Much light is shed on this quote when read in its original context, rather than the context staged by Arendt herself.

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[77] Ibid., 331n.

> The result of the capitalist production process...is the creation of *surplus-value* for capital...Its aim is the *accumulation of wealth*, the *self-expansion of value*...And it achieves this *specific product* of the capitalist production process only in exchange with labor, which for that reason is called *productive labor*. [...] What forms its *specific use-value* for capital is not its specific useful character, any more than it is the particular useful properties of the product in which it is materialised. But what forms its specific use-value for capital is its character as the element which creates exchange-value, abstract labor...It follows from what has been said that the designation of labor as *productive labor* has absolutely nothing to do with the *determinate content* of the labor, its special utility, or the particular use-value in which it manifests itself. *The same* kind of labor may be *productive* or *unproductive*. For example Milton, who wrote *Paradise Lost* for five pounds, was an *unproductive laborer*. On the other hand, [illegible] writer who turns out stuff for his publisher in factory style, is a *productive laborer*. Milton produced *Paradise Lost* for the same reason that a silk worm produces silk. It was an activity of *his* nature. Later he sold the product for £5. But the literary proletarian of Leipzig, who fabricates books (for example, Compendia of Economics) under the direction of his publisher, is a *productive laborer;* for his product is from the outset subsumed under capital, and comes into being only for the purpose of increasing that capital. A singer who sells her song for her own account is an *unproductive laborer*. But the same singer commissioned by an entrepreneur to sing in order to make money for him is a *productive laborer;* for she produces capital.[78]

If Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* because "it was an activity of his nature," we could interpret this as a leveling of Milton's great work to mere labor within the human natural life-process, an expression of the human species begetting life, on par with that of the worm. This is likely how Arendt meant her readers to interpret the line. Marx's notion of abstract labor measures value according to labor-time. According to Arendt's rendering of Marx's notion of value, the hours of work it took for Milton to write his masterpiece would just as well have been spent tilling soil. Read another way, however, and Milton suddenly writes according to the nature of his species, that is, as a universal and self-conscious being, just as the worm works according to the species-character of worms. Reading it this way recasts Marx's depiction of labor's substantiation of man's universal character, as he developed it early on in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*. To best understand Marx's intent with this line, it should be read in the context of his discussion of productive versus unproductive labor within the capitalist production of surplus value. Marx chose Milton precisely because his work embodies so much beauty and imagination, discloses so much of the world. Only within the social relations of capitalism did Milton's work become unproductive, since it produced no surplus value, generated no capital. Thus, works that most actualize the species-character of humans, its universality and imagination, can at the same time be the least productive, depending only on how much abstract surplus value they generate. This depends not on the world-disclosive power or aesthetic value of the product, but on the property relations within which the work is produced and sold. This, Marx argues, is an effect of the specific social relations of capitalism as a historically particular mode of production.

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[78] Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, 399-401.

In a 1962 critique of Arendt's reading of Marx, W. Suchting suggests that Marx's image of socialized humanity did not aim to overcome labor in general, but a certain kind of labor, determined by need and characterized by a division of mental and physical labor.[79] In "Alienated Labor" Marx writes: "By degrading free spontaneous activity to the level of a means, alienated labor makes the species-life of man a means of his physical existence."[80] Phillip Hansen charges that Arendt fails to recognize that Marx was concerned with alienation from the world, as "the forum for the exercise of human powers" and his desire to therefore promote the very possibilities for action that she defends.[81] He further argues that

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[79] Suchting, "Marx and Hannah Arendt's 'The Human Condition,'" 50.

[80] Marx, "Alienated Labor," 64.

[81] Hansen, *Politics, History, and Citizenship*, 38.

Arendt's charge that imagination plays no role in Marx's labor theory of value is contentious:

> This is not an obvious conclusion. It becomes even less so in light of Marx's criticisms of the dehumanizing effects of capitalist production and private property, particularly their penchant for transforming potentially human activity into merely animal functions and for systematically dulling human intellectual faculties.[82]

Bertell Ollman writes that Marx's labor theory of value emerges as Marx's conceptualization of capitalist economic conditions and results, a description and condemnation of the situation of its alienated people. Thus, "[t]he question is not how could Marx treat labor as an abstraction, but how could society do so."[83] When Arendt argues that the Marx of *Capital* abandons imagination, thus melding labor and work and setting one unit of value, abstract labor time, she accuses Marx of himself abandoning the notion of the world's inherent worth, when Marx was merely making a diagnosis – relating how the capitalist mode of production levels particular qualities and sources of worth and makes them appear as abstract value. He relays the way that worth appears from the political economic perspective, a perspective he hoped would be overcome in the post-historical moment, when the worth of man's creations could appear more authentically for the particular qualities they embodied. It is as though Arendt blames Marx for introducing capitalism's leveling forces, when it was in fact Marx's critical analysis of capitalism that provided Arendt with the tools for her own critique of the social. However, while we can see the early Marx's influence on Arendt's notion of a world-constituting *homo faber*, Marx can also be read as hoping to overcome the previous meanings embodied in traditional objects, since they act as fetters to man's self-awareness as standing truly in control of his own worldly possibilities, his own freedom. Marx, indeed, saw capitalism turning all other past relations and the meaning of objects "into air," but it can be contested whether he actually lamented this loss of meaning.

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[82] Ibid., 41.

[83] Ollman, *Alienation*, 172.

Despite Arendt's questionable criticism of Marx's labor theory of value, what is important to remember is that Arendt refuses that the *who* can be disclosed through the attitudinal perspective proper to either labor, as bound by necessity, or work, which is ruled by the utilitarian logic of means and ends. Whether Arendt did justice to the self-actualizing, imaginative dimensions of Marx's notion of non-alienated labor is not the most important question. More significant is Arendt's contention that Marx's notion of labor is world-alienating in its subjectivism – in the promise that socialized man can objectify his self-transparent individuality to actualize his essence and assume his rightful position as the source of all value.[84] Arendt's concern over Marx's hyper-subjectivism may have been fueled by passages such as the following, from "Private Property and Communism":

> [I]t is only when objective actuality generally becomes for man in society the actuality of essential human capacities, human actuality, and thus the actuality of his *own* capacities that all *objects* become for him the *objectification* of himself, becomes objects which confirm and realize his individuality as *his* objects, that is, *he himself* becomes the object.[85]

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[84] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 365n.

[85] Marx, "Private Property and Communism," 74-75.

The Work Model of Freedom

Arendt's notion of disclosure of the *who* in relation to the *world* must be distinguished from the Hegelian and Marxian notion of self-actualization and self-objectification through *work*. The most fruitful question here is whether the *who* can, in fact, be disclosed according to the work model of freedom and self-actualization. The work model of freedom finds its strongest representative in Hegel. Hegel approaches the question of situated freedom by attempting to synthesize radical freedom and nature in concrete rational autonomy. To be autonomous, the agent must follow what Kant sees as his very essence: pure rational will. Hegel sees vacuity and negativity in Kant's formal universalism and seeks to unite it with normative and practical substance, real social and political institutions, so as to determine or materially actualize the free moral will. According to Hegel, freedom must not remain absolute and unsituated, but secured in the concrete institutions of ethical life; rational and moral freedom must be embodied in its opposite, the finite human being and his social relations. The historical rationalization of social relations can be seen as the *work* of Geist. For Charles Taylor, in his interpretation of Hegel, the notion of human agency depends on reflexively positing purposive ends by which to direct action. Self-reflexivity implies a privileged agent self-knowledge, not necessarily available to an external spectator who witnesses the actor empirically. Taylor holds that "we are capable of grasping our own action in a way that we cannot come to know external objects and events…[it is] a knowledge we are capable of concerning our own action which we can attain as the doers of this action."[86] Situated agent knowledge depends, for Hegel and Taylor, on articulating the implicit sense of our purposes and feelings as actors in order to bring them to fuller self-consciousness. Thought, in this sense, is conceived as *activity*. Clarifying the terms of our self-consciousness and, by extension, the terms of our relations with others, is, in Hegel's terms, the *work* and activity of Geist. Every rational thought and activity is shown to be an extension of spirit's activity. Reality is actuality, or *Wirklichkeit*.[87] Thus, the Hegelian conception of freedom as concrete political autonomy depends on critical communication in constructing rational laws and relations of intersubjective recognition.

Marx articulates a new form of materialism, based on the Hegelian notion of history as a process of active self-making. *Praxis* is conceived as sensuous and critical human activity that realizes freedom in both concrete social relations and the modes in which these relations appear to human consciousness. *Praxis* appears in the form of work. This work entails the transformation of materials – from natural resources and personal talents to social relations of production, political institutions, and modes of appearance of the object – according to a posited end. Unlike Arendt, Marx sees the production of an objective world not as an artifice separate from nature, but as the humanization of nature, a continuation out of it. Nature reappears under socialized humanity as man's work:

> In the treatment of the object world, therefore, man proves himself to be genuinely a *species-being*. This production is his active species-life. Through it

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[86] Taylor, "Hegel's Philosophy of Mind," 80.
[87] Ibid., 84.

> nature appears as *his* work and his actuality. The object of labor is thus the *objectification of man's species-life*: he produces himself not only intellectually, as in consciousness, but also actively in a real sense and sees himself in a world he made.[88]

Here, man's freedom is realized in his productive relation to the objective world he fashions out of nature. Mildred Bakan charges that Arendt's separation of action from labor and work obscures action's relation to its own materially determined possibilities, including modes of public assembly and interdependence that transform with the mode of production. This, argues Bakan, is rooted in Arendt's refusal of the Hegelian-Marxist notion of the material development of potentiality for freedom and reason, as well as the dialectical relationship between necessity and freedom.[89] For Marx, the historical development of freedom is mediated by sensuous materiality, or what Marx calls inorganic nature, after its humanization. Arendt, conversely, conceives nature as cyclical and eternal, ultimately resistant to man's attempts to overcome it, and as countered by the objective human artifice. Jennifer Ring writes:

> Human beings, according to Arendt, literally produce their own objectivity, which once produced attains an inevitable independence from human beings. For Marx, the independence or the dichotomy between subject and object is what defines alienation and is the result of social conditions; for Arendt, in contrast, the dichotomy is in some sense natural. [...] Marx's dialectical methodology, however, leads him inevitably to think in terms of process so that the material world upon which he grounds his political theory cannot be regarded as static or even stable. From the perspective of Marx's methodology, the stability Arendt seeks in the material world is illusory.[90]

If we trace the sense of *Werk* from Marx back to Hegel, it would include not only the transformation of physical nature, but also the rationalization of social relations and political forms, mediated by rational thought and speech. Instead of reading Marx's "base" as unidirectionally determining "superstructure," we may rather read "superstructure" as circling back on the "base," determining how the mediator of subjective consciousness perceives the "base," and thus acting in a co-determining, dialectical relationship. This is more faithful to Marx's texts and to the phenomenon of historically situated agency. It allows us to read Marx as accounting for the discursive disclosure of *who* an actor is and *how* he sees the *world*, the conceptual overlaying and interpretation of the meaning of the world of fabricated things.

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[88] Marx, "Alienated Labor," 64.
[89] Bakan, "Hannah Arendt's Concepts of Labor and Work," 57-60.
[90] Ring, "On Needing Both Marx and Arendt," 436-37.

Arendt's hard distinction between action and work tends to undercut the Hegelian notion that *work* can be theoretical and linguistic, the critical "working" of reason on social conditions. What is decisive is that Hegel and Marx's notion of work, even if understood from its conceptual rather than material side, still posits an ideal, rational state of affairs that directs action and serves as criteria for its being judged by spectators. This narrows the many-sided, disclosive potential of acts and words. The fundamental limit to disclosure in Marx is that whatever meaning particular agents overlay their world with, this meaning is class-determined, and bound up in the revolutionary struggle. It is as though the struggle that moves dialectical historicism forward toward an end state of socialized humanity were the arbiter for all spectators. In this model, the meaning of one's acts is not retrospectively interpreted by a judging spectator, nor is it judged on its own virtuosity, uniqueness, disclosive power, or exemplary validity, but rather according to where it fits within the class struggle and thus within the larger process of historical materialism. This narrows the actor's and spectator's potential perspective on the meaning of deeds and speech, as well as the features of the shared world that actors can predicate. As we saw earlier, according to Arendt, the *who* is disclosed only when the actors exist in disinterested togetherness, in the sense that they are neither for, nor against each other, so that their action is not governed by the logic of means and ends that governs the work model of making.

Revolution and the Social Question

Material inequality is not always conceived as a political issue. At particular historical moments and in particular places, this divide has been considered a natural and unchangeable one. It is only when the justice of this divide becomes a legitimate question in the public realm, or when the suffering of the poor becomes the focus of revolutionary discourse, that we become confronted with what Arendt calls the "social question." The stubbornness and complexity of the social question is a theme that runs all the way through Arendt's *On Revolution*. In this work, Arendt tells the story of what she sees as the relative failure of the French Revolution and the relative success of the American Revolution, which she measures by their respective attempts at founding a space for the practice of political freedom, the theatre in which political actors disclose themselves. The decisive condition in the French failure and the American success, argues Arendt, was the degree to which the revolutionaries on each side of the Atlantic were forced to reckon with the social question. Her thesis, a characteristically controversial one, provides insight into her reading of Marx and his advancement of a revolutionary ideal inseparable from the social dimension.

Arendt sees the French Revolution as the clearest example of the failures of a revolution fought not for political freedom or public happiness, but rather for the relief for the majority of the population from the pains of necessity. Arendt understands poverty as one's being bound to physical need to such an extent as to be unavailable to others in public space and to be thus unable to disclose *who* one is through speech that transcends interest and instrumentality. She holds that the French Revolution missed its opportunity to found a space for freedom when the impoverished *Sans Culottes* appeared on the public scene, so that their material happiness, and the rectification of social inequality, became the principle of the revolution, rather than political freedom. For Arendt, social equality can never serve as the guiding principle for the actors of a successful revolution. Here she describes the public appearance of the poor:

> And this multitude, appearing for the first time in broad daylight, was actually the multitude of the poor and the downtrodden, who every century before had hidden in darkness and shame. What from then on has been irrevocable, and what the agents and spectators of revolution immediately recognized as such, was that the public realm – reserved, as far as memory could reach, to those who *were* free, namely carefree of all the worries that are connected with life's necessity, with bodily needs – should offer its space and its light to this immense majority who are not free because they are driven by daily needs.[91]

Arendt translates the appearance of the poor in public light to the appearance of the irresistible force of natural necessity to which human bodies are perpetually bound. This irresistible movement, once publicized, was expressed in the revolutionary imaginary through metaphors of torrents, storms, currents, and marches, all painting the picture of a force greater than the actions of particular revolutionaries. Canovan writes:

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[91] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 48.

> For the overwhelming impression made by the French Revolution was that those who started the Revolution did not control its course, but were swept away by a seemingly inexorable process, and in *On Revolution*, Arendt argues that this observed process of necessity was actually the expression of *biological* necessity, that is to say, of the experience of poverty.[92]

The perceived revolutionary torrent was conceptualized by the spectators of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including Kant, Hegel, and Marx, as historical necessity, a concept we will examine more thoroughly in chapter five.

Arendt partly attributes the "transformation of the Rights of Man into the rights of Sans-Culottes"[93] in subsequent revolutions to the influence of Marx's understanding of revolution. She charges that Marx finally neglects the importance of a revolutionary founding of freedom in favor of "the seemingly objective course of revolutionary events."[94] Arendt admits that the young Marx interpreted the social question in an unprecedented way that deeply shaped the principles of subsequent revolutions, for which she calls him "the greatest theorist the revolutions ever had."[95] Marx saw the French Revolution's failure to found freedom as a result of its failure to alleviate poverty universally. He understood poverty in terms of violent oppression and man-made, class-based exploitation. Arendt writes: "His most explosive and indeed most original contribution to the cause of revolution was that he interpreted the compelling needs of mass poverty in political terms as an uprising, not for the sake of bread or wealth, but for the sake of freedom as well."[96] Arendt finds less value in the scientific content of his class analysis than in its influence on subsequent revolutions, proposing that Marx's description of a class of capitalists ruling over laborers holds true only for the early stages of capitalism, "when poverty on an unprecedented scale was the result of expropriation by force."[97] Marx's important influence on subsequent revolutions comes from his politicization of the "new science of economics,"[98] by persuading the poor that their lot was a matter of exploitation and violence, rather than necessity and scarcity.

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[92] Canovan, 78.
[93] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 61.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.

On the other hand, Arendt argues that after the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx redefined the revolutionary urge of his youth in economic terms and explained every violation through the laws of necessity. She suggests that the later Marx interpreted violence and oppression as arising out of necessity, whereas he had initially posited the reverse – that labor bound by necessity (immediate need) arose out of the violence of class exploitation. Arendt proposes that this reversal was due to theoretical considerations, to Marx's wish to raise his theory to the rank of natural science, rather than to a loss of revolutionary enthusiasm on his part. She sees the reversal as theoretically facilitated by the reversibility of concepts within Hegelian dialectical categories. This reversal consequently threatens the revolutionary promise of freedom in favor of the ideal of universal material abundance:

> And since [Marx]...equated necessity with the compelling urges of the life process, he finally strengthened more than anybody else the politically most pernicious doctrine of the modern age, namely that life is the highest good, and that the life process of society is the very centre of human endeavour. Thus the

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[96] Ibid., 62.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.

> role of revolution was no longer to liberate men from the oppression of their fellow men, let alone to found freedom, but to liberate the life process of society from the fetters of scarcity so that it could swell into a stream of abundance.[99]

Pitkin reminds us that while Marx indeed aims at material abundance, it is not abundance for its own sake, but rather "for the freedom and humanization to which he thinks abundance is prerequisite."[100] This is apparent in this passage from Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*, where references to a "stream" and "flow" of abundance may be found:

> In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and thereby also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished; after labor has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of common wealth flow more abundantly – only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs![101]

Arendt often writes about Marx's notions of historical and natural necessity without making a clear distinction as to which category of necessity she means. However, it is important to remember that these two notions of necessity are not mutually exclusive in Marx's depiction of a historically progressive humanization of nature. *Species-being* is both part of nature and the only being whose conditions of labor change significantly over time. Historical revolutions in the social conditions of labor are seen to necessarily emerge out of the resolving of contradictions inherent to the relations between members of the species, positioned in a structurally antagonistic relation to each other in a way mediated by their respective property relation to productive forces, and contradictions between these social relations and the extent of development of the productive forces themselves. According to Marx's historical materialism, strictly separating what is historically necessary and naturally necessary fetishizes both. All of Marx's categories and concepts, to be true to his methodology, should be read not as mutually independent or as exerting unidirectional causal force, one to the other. Ollman tells us that Marx is best read as a philosophy of internal relations, where "things" and even conceptual categories are conceived as "relations" so that their meanings can only be manifest through their internal ontological relation with each other, a relation that can change over time, and according to the standpoint in the web of relations from which one begins their analysis.[102] Arendt's criticism of Marx for reversing the causal direction between violent exploitation and natural-historical necessity is indicative of her own Kantian-inspired methodological approach. She sees the meanings of concepts and phenomena as best disclosed by drawing out their differences, rather than by emphasizing their mutual relation. There is a danger to this approach, which is that in reifying categories of analysis, one conceals as much as is revealed about the phenomena under analysis. However, there is also a danger in the opposite blurring of concepts, which risks robbing our language of its critical force if one uses terms interchangeably.

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[99] Ibid., 64.

[100] Pitkin, 138.

[101] Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program," in *Selected Writings*, 321.

To reiterate, Arendt makes the strong claim that revolutions are bound to fail at establishing freedom whenever the social question – material happiness and social equality – becomes its primary principle and aim. Moreover, she concludes that the social question cannot be solved by revolution, or purely political means. Some have taken Arendt's thesis as a sign of insensitivity to the plight of the poor, or a naturalization and depoliticization of conditions of class exploitation. By using the word *necessity* to speak of poverty, it may appear as though Arendt justifies poverty as the natural state of mankind. This is a misreading. Arendt does not suggest that the divide between rich and poor has no political or violent, exploitative basis, or that it is the result of blind natural selection. In fact, Arendt explicitly admits that in pre-modernity, the possibility of political freedom for the few depended on the violent subjection of others to slavery, so as to free the masters from the demands of natural need and labor: "All rulership has its original and its most legitimate source in man's wish to emancipate himself from life's necessity, and men achieved such liberation by means of violence, by forcing others to bear the burden of life for them."[103] Arendt's thesis is that the public appearance of the social divide unleashes rage, terror, and primordial violence, and that this force makes the revolutionary foundation and subsequent maintenance of the institutional and communicative conditions of freedom impossible. This terror is so forceful and urgent because it is nourished by the necessity of biological life itself, a necessity Arendt conceives as an irresistible process. However, according to Arendt, it is ultimately impotent, both in establishing freedom and establishing material equality: "The *enragés*...were those who refused to bear and endure their suffering any longer, without, however, being able to rid themselves of it or even to alleviate it."[104] The suffering of the poor turned into rage when the leaders of the revolution, especially Robespierre, identified this misery as "the best and even only guarantee of virtue, so that – albeit without realizing it – the men of the Revolution set out to emancipate the people not *qua* prospective citizens but *qua malheureux*."[105]

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[102] Ollman, 3-40.

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[103] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 114.
[104] Ibid., 111.

The transformation of mass suffering into terror, and the destructive effects that this has on the potential institution of a space of freedom, is a central theme in *On Revolution*. But how does this transformation bear on the notion of the disclosure of the *who*? We see in Arendt's analysis of Rousseau, Robespierre, Melville, and Dostoevsky, how compassion for the suffering masses becomes a sort of unworldly and absolute virtue that is blind to plurality in its abstraction, and destructive to politics in its impatience. Arendt reads the French Revolution as driven by a compassion for *le peuple*. Ferenc Feher assesses that one of the "great *trouvailles* of Arendt's theory of the French Revolution is the morphology of the modern revolutionary attitude."[106] The Jacobin emerges as a "man of compassion for the misery of the needy" with its object of compassion being *le peuple*, an "amorphous and anonymous crowd."[107] The people in this case must be seen as mass, writes Arendt, because of the singularity of objects of compassion. Arendt revisits Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov* to relate that compassion, as co-suffering, cannot be directed to the sufferings of a whole class or people, but only to the suffering of one person. Compared to reason, compassion comprehends the general with great difficulty. The Grand Inquisitor, like Robespierre, was attracted to the weak not only out of a lust for power, but because he had conceived of them as a singular aggregate and thus a fit object of compassion. *Le peuple malheureux* could easily form a singular object of compassion because the appeal to satisfy bodily hunger could be made as one demand by one subject, lacking any plurality or uniqueness.[108] Feher adds: "The revolutionary can have an enormous empathy with his anonymous object *in abstracto* without having *in concreto* the slightest affection for any living human being. Moreover, he can be abstractly compassionate and practically ruthless."[109] Arendt suggests that compassion for suffering is directed toward the particular suffering man himself and, as such, is impatient with the worldly use of argumentative speech, negotiation, and persuasion in matters of interest to more than one party:

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[105] Ibid.

[106] Feher, "Freedom and the 'Social Question,'" 20.

[107] Ibid.

> The political trouble which misery of the people holds in store is that manyness can in fact assume the guise of oneness, that suffering indeed breeds moods and emotions and attitudes that resemble solidarity to the point of confusion, and that – last, not least – pity for the many is easily confounded with compassion for one person when the 'compassionate zeal' (*le zèle compatissant*) can fasten upon an object whose oneness seems to fulfill the prerequisites of compassion, while its immensity, at the same time, corresponds to the boundlessness of sheer emotion.[110]

Arendt writes that since most revolutionaries were not of *le peuple*, but wanted to fight for their happiness, the virtue of the revolution became acting according to what Rousseau articulated as *la volonté générale*, a way of acting that requires not only the transcending of one's particular interests, but treating them as internal enemies. Robespierre was influenced by Rousseau's idea that selfishness was the worst vice, and the natural feeling of general compassion for the other the highest virtue.[111] Arendt relates that Melville and Dostoevsky see the notion of absolute natural goodness as beyond virtues that can be realized in concrete political institutions.[112] Melville paints natural goodness as the kind held by Rousseau's pre-societal man. Feher notes that revolutionary virtue par excellence is an intemperate compassion based on an anthropological manichaenism that sees good in *le peuple*, as opposed to the rich. This form of natural goodness is dangerous in its forceful and violent assertion; all is permitted in its defense.[113] Because it acts violently, absolute goodness is at odds with the peace of the world guaranteed by stable institutions in which the worldly interests of men can be talked about and negotiated. It is impatient with the slow-moving, worldly, political use of speech, negotiation, persuasion, and lawful reform. Robespierre and Rousseau's *sentiment de pitié* is so abstract, forceful, and urgent that it takes no heed of lawful limits, nor the dignity of singular individuals. Once the social question became a public issue, notions of the natural goodness of a class or of the nation take precedence to questions regarding the proper forms of government for founding the conditions of political freedom. Arendt writes:

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[108] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 85, 94.
[109] Feher, 20.
[110] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 94.
[111] Ibid., 73-82.

> Jesus's silence in 'The Grand Inquisitor' and Billy Budd's stammer indicate the same, namely their incapacity (or unwillingness) for all kinds of predicative or argumentative speech, in which someone talks *to* somebody *about* something that is of interest to both because it *inter-est*, it is between them. Such talkative and argumentative interest in the world is entirely alien to compassion, which is directed solely, and with passionate intensity, toward suffering man himself...[114]

Feher argues that there is an alternative type of compassion than the one Arendt describes through her reading of Melville and Dostoevsky. He suggests that there is middle ground between the compassion necessary for revolutionary motivation and the unsentimental solidarity that he sees Arendt identifying as the main virtue of the American Revolution.[115] We may relate this solidarity to the depersonalized public, the theatre of the masked *persona*. Villa writes:

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[112] Ibid., 84.
[113] Feher, 20.
[114] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 86.

> Insofar as action is driven by the immediacy of unbearable oppression or material want, it cannot hope to attain the degree of impersonality that is the hallmark of *political* action. The passions and needs that drive such desperate, often violent action have little to do with what Arendt calls 'care for the world,' by which she means concern for the artificial 'home' that a political association provides for human beings. Concern for this 'in-between,' for the structure of institutions and terms of association it sets, is what marks the *political* actor.[116]

Arendt holds that despite the existence of poverty in the slave populations of America, the American Revolution was not moved by the same compassion for the social question as was the French Revolution. The laboring majority was not as concerned with economic interests, but rather with access to the public realm, to excel and be seen in public.[117] Sheldon Wolin, however, argues that Arendt's account of the American Constitution shows her "antipathy toward material questions, in this case, the economic motives of the Founding Fathers, even though many of the founders were not hesitant to argue them openly in public space, as it were."[118] Richard Bernstein similarly charges that Arendt underestimates the extent to which any struggle for political freedom has its origin in a fight for social justice and, as a result, Arendt misreads the American Revolution.[119] With regard to the French Revolution, some have charged that Arendt exaggerates the extent to which its actors could have chosen to ignore the social question, and not allowed it to direct their discourse and aims. Feher writes:

> Arendt's main error is her failure to understand that in this situation, the choice could not have been one of acting politically only and thus sending the poor packing. In the household, where, for Arendt, the social problem must find its

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[115] Feher, 21.
[116] Villa, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror*, 118.
[117] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 69-70.
[118] Wolin, S., "Hannah Arendt: Democracy and the Political," 298.
[119] Bernstein, *Philosophical Profiles*, 255-56.

> resolution, fifty percent of the budget was spent on bread, and bread was regularly in short supply.[120]

However, Arendt does not suggest that the Revolutionaries had an easy choice in the matter, that the social question can easily be ignored even under conditions of mass poverty. Rather, she admits that a revolutionary foundation of freedom is extremely difficult under such conditions, and usually bound to fail, since the urgency of liberation from necessity usually trumps political freedom. While Arendt recognizes what Marx made clear – that some poverty is the result of violent class exploitation – she sees it, at the same time, as largely insurmountable by political means: "Human life has been stricken with poverty since times immemorial, and mankind continues to labor under this curse in all countries outside the Western Hemisphere."[121] Arendt holds that "it is only the rise of technology, and not the rise of modern political ideas as such, which has refuted the old and terrible truth that only violence and rule over others could make some men free."[122] From this we can interpret that satisfying the demands of necessity is, after all, fundamental to freedom, making one's self available for action and disclosure. This has historically been achieved by the few through slavery and class exploitation. However, Arendt sees the possibility of a universalization of the potential for political engagement as provided by the expansion of productive forces. This aspect of her theory of freedom reads like Marx. Arendt does not hold that freedom has no material basis – rather, freedom depends on the satisfaction of immediate biological need. On the other hand, this satisfaction, and the expansion of productive forces it necessitates, does not guarantee that the potential for freedom it materially provides will be actualized. As we have seen, a politics that reduces itself to the administration of abundance is no politics at all, according to Arendt. Unlike Marx, Arendt's concept of freedom is not chiefly characterized by the social conditions that frame production, the freedom to exert mental and physical capacities, to create works no longer estranged from their producers. It does entail – and this is an aspect of Marx's vision of freedom – the relating of one human to another as individuals, rather than as merely members of a particular class. For Marx, this social relation of non-estrangement means that individuals meet each other as co-bearers of what he calls full human emancipation, marked not by legal right and citizenship, but by their shared and rationalized control of productive forces.

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[120] Feher, 19.
[121] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 112.
[122] Ibid., 114.

One might ask if Arendt's recognition of the force of necessity does not contradict her faith in the spontaneity of action, the freedom to choose to act in a certain way under given conditions, and the subsequent responsibility that this brings to bear on the actors. It is crucial to remember that Arendt harbors no illusions over the large extent to which objective natural, material, and historical conditions perpetually frustrate the aims of action. When judging acts, Arendt's spectator places more emphasis on the general principles by which they are inspired than on their ultimate success or failure in achieving their goals. This is why the example of the French Revolution could inspire subsequent action, despite its own failures.

The Properly Political Attitude

In this chapter we have explored various aspects of Arendt's critique of Marx that have all recast one of her fundamental theses: for political action to disclose the *who* and to found and maintain the institutional conditions for subsequent intersubjective public disclosures, action must be free of the logic of both labor and work, unfettered by questions of the administration of private concerns. This thesis inspires Arendt's phenomenological distinction between the appropriate conditions and dispositions of labor, work, and action. As we saw in previous chapters, Arendt proposes that action is only free, and only discloses the *who*, when undertaken according to the spirit of performance, undetermined by the means and ends logic of *homo faber*, the logic of making. In this chapter we have focused mainly on the way in which disclosive action must remain free of the determinations of *animal laborans*, a position that drives Arendt's ominous story of the rise of the social, her critique of Marx' socialized humanity and labor theory or value, and her treatment of the social question in her account of revolutions. Some critics have referred to this set of propositions in very general terms, as Arendt's distinction between the public and the private. Others have read it as a prioritization of political freedom at the cost of social and material justice and equality. It is undoubtedly one of the most fundamental – and controversial – aspects of Arendt's oeuvre. Many critics charge that Arendt presents an image of politics purified of material concerns and questions of social justice, a form of *praxis* that is vacuous, that is ignorant of class-based, gendered, and racialized perspectives, and that consequently serves to legitimize injustices and narrow the horizon of the meaning of freedom. This seriously problematizes the notion of an actor's self-elective appearance as a masked persona in the space of appearance. It has been charged that Arendt ignores socio-economic injustices, or exploitative relations of production, that are masked in the depersonalization of the public sphere, while these relations actually determine which private individuals are permitted to wear a public mask, appear in public as a disclosive voice in the world. Reinhardt writes:

> [A]ll performances inevitably reveal "what" as well as "who" we are, carrying within them their histories of violent imposition. Marx understood that those impositions are not simply what politics resists, but are, themselves, crucial political moments. He showed that what we are is not only a congealed performance that can be unsettled but also something palpable and fixed by its position in an unequal structure of power relations.[123]

Sheldon Wolin, who defines democracy as the "attempt of the many to reverse the natural cycle of power, to translate social weakness into political power,"[124] identifies an anti-democratic element in Arendt's distinction between the political and the social.

To what extent does Arendt propose that a free and meaningful politics can and must be rid of any concerns over justice in the sphere of social relations of production, material equality, and the alleviation of poverty? In this section we revisit this debate, to explore and rearticulate what is at stake in Arendt's separation of the "properly political" from natural necessity and material determinations. To reiterate, Arendt holds that the narrative disclosure of the uniqueness of the *who* of political actors is what constitutes human dignity and redeems action. It is by keeping in mind the centrality of disclosure, the agent-revealing capacity of action, that we can make most sense of Arendt's distinction and the long debate surrounding it. Arendt writes:

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[123] Reinhardt, 157.
[124] Wolin, S., 289.

> Action and speech go on between men, as they are directed toward them, and they retain their agent-revealing capacity even if their content is exclusively "objective," concerned with the matters of the world of things in which men move, which physically lies between them and out of which arise their specific, objective, worldly interests.[125]

According to Benhabib, Arendt's phenomenological distinction between public and private is a valuable one, and offers an account of the intimate and private as a discrete sphere, without depoliticizing questions of domestic relations. Benhabib argues that any defense of Arendt's relevance today, however, requires a slight reconstruction of her distinction between the social and political, private and public. This divide, Benhabib suggests, can be understood three ways. The first is by the "content of object domains," drawing the distinction according to the degree of materiality of the content in question.[126] This measure of demarcation, for Benhabib, ignores power relations in the economy, as well as the degree to which politics involves questions of justice in the work world and domestic sphere. Arendt herself found this line of distinction useless, given that the content of political discourse changes historically. At Toronto, after Mary McCarthy's question about what is left to be spoken about when social questions are excluded from politics, Arendt responds: "At all times people living together will have affairs that belong in the realm of the public – 'are worthy to be talked about in public.' What these matters *are* at any historical *moment* is probably

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[125] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 162.
[126] Benhabib, 139-40.

utterly different."[127] At the same conference, Arendt reiterates that there is, indeed, a material prerequisite for freedom and for the existence of a healthy public sphere, in the protection of private property as a place of one's own: "To make a decent amount of property available to every human being – not to expropriate, but to spread property – then you will have some possibilities for freedom even under the rather inhuman conditions of modern production."[128]

A second possible measure of distinction is "institutional," which would locate the economy in the private sphere, civil society in the social sphere, and the state in the public sphere. This is problematic, according to Benhabib, because of the blurring of these lines when it comes to locating specific institutions that cross these boundaries.[129] Many have charged Arendt with setting up these two types of distinction.

Albrecht Wellmer writes that in Arendt's attempt to establish the autonomy of the political, she reifies an opposition between political problems and socio-economic justice. He sees this reification as naïve, and as constituting the great weakness of her thought.[130] Wellmer suggests that the unsurpassable horizon of the political problem of modernity is posed in the relation of liberal universalism and Marxian universalism, or the collision between the normative notion of universal human rights protected by an institutionalized world society, and a universalism of the economy and technology, something he sees now as a matter of fact.[131] Wellmer finds Arendt's notion of public freedom as fruitful if we keep in mind that deliberation over the common concerns of social justice, equality, and the meaning of freedom can only legitimately take place if a sphere of public freedom is established:

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[127] November 1972 Toronto conference proceedings transcribed as "The Work of Hannah Arendt," in Hill, *Recovery of the Public World*, 317.
[128] Ibid., 320.
[129] Benhabib, 139-40.
[130] Wellmer, "Arendt on Revolution," 232.

> Today, it almost seems a banality to observe that the outlook for political freedom in the modern world depends (in the long run) upon how successfully capitalism can be domesticated in a democratic way, and upon whether the minimum of social justice can be achieved on an international scale...[Arendt] overlooked the fact that the problems Marx confronted are still our – political – problems, which means that they concern political freedom's conditions of possibility in the modern world.[132]

Mildred Bakan charges that Arendt's separation of action from labor and work obscures action's relation to its own materially determined possibilities, including modes of public assembly and interdependence that transform with the mode of production. This, argues Bakan, is rooted in Arendt's refusal of the Hegelian-Marxist notion of the material development of potentiality for freedom and reason.[133] Arendt's understanding of the relationship between economic interest and political action is given more nuanced treatment in a section of *The Human Condition* dedicated to spontaneous labor movements, of which she cites the 1848 revolution in many parts of Europe and the 1956 Hungarian revolution. Arendt distinguishes between trade unions, which presented the working class as but one class in society, and whose interests were directed mainly toward economic reform, from labor's political aspirations, which sought new possible forms of public appearance. Arendt admits that the demands of trade unions and political parties could not usually be neatly divided into economic versus political categories:

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[131] Ibid., 229-30.
[132] Ibid., 235.
[133] Bakan, 57.

> The trade unions, defending and fighting for the interests of the working class, are responsible for…an extraordinary increase in economic security, social prestige, and political power. […] [A]nd the political parties of the working class have been interest parties most of the time…[134]

But, for the most part, Arendt finds, the trade unions were not revolutionary, since they did not demand a change of political form, but only socio-economic change. However, in rare cases during a revolution, workers that were independent of trade unions and political parties, "if not led by official party programs and ideologies, had their own ideas about the possibilities of democratic government under modern conditions."[135] Arendt attributes the political power of labor movements to the notion that they were the only group that not only defended their particular economic interests, which she sees as incidental, but also fought a political battle as "the only organization in which men acted and spoke *qua* men – and not *qua* members of society"[136] and as the only group to engender a new public space with new political standards and possibilities.

Benhabib proposes that the most relevant demarcation between public, private, and social realms is "attitudinal," where different types of logic, rationality, and attitudes prevail in the respective domains.[137] The private sphere would be seen as dominated by the logic of mutual dependence for life preservation and economic stability. The authentically political attitude would be seen as a willingness to engage in an enlarged mentality, to posit reasons for action, entertain points of view in anticipated communication with others, the treatment of others as ends in themselves. Arendt writes that thought that is "related closely to the thoughts of others," is always political, as it "always confirms that Kantian 'enlarged mentality' which is the political mentality *par excellence*."[138] A clear attitudinal separation of political action from the private or social spheres would, according to Villa, rescue action from being situated in a teleological context, governed by the logic of means and ends, where action is undemocratically instrumentalized.[139] Wellmer suggests that political discourse is autonomous "in that it gives neither private interest nor the knowledge and methods of the expert the last word."[140] This is, in part, because properly political matters have no certain solution, no ideal image by which to fabricate the desired state of affairs. To reiterate a point made in chapter one, the properly political attitude, one free from determination by the logic of *techne*, must be engaged when a plurality of actors, as *who*s, encounter each other in public. *Who*s cannot be managed, as stable, namable, constative entities – as *what*s whose natures are present-at-hand or ready-to-hand. At Toronto Arendt says:

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[134] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 193.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid., 195.
[137] Benhabib, 139-40.

> Public debate can only deal with things which – if we want to put it negatively – we cannot figure out with certainty. [...] Let's take the housing problem. The social problem is certainly adequate housing. But the question of whether this adequate housing means integration or not is *certainly* a political question. With every one of these questions there is a double face.[141]

Bernstein argues that Arendt's reservation of a social realm where expert knowledge should be left in charge of administration lends credence to a myth that there exists, in fact, non-political or non-ideological knowledge about social issues, unbound by power and interests. Arendt herself criticizes the social sciences for trying to master what are political issues, outside the realm of normalized behavior, but she fails to see, according to Bernstein, that almost all social questions are political.[142]

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[138] Arendt, "Karl Jaspers: A Laudatio," 79.
[139] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 198.
[140] Wellmer, "Arendt on Revolution," 235.
[141] "Work of Hannah Arendt," 317-18.

Again, Arendt proposes that the properly political attitude is that of Kant's enlarged mentality, that mentality through which the political actor performs his judgment over questions of right and beauty, before a discursive community of others. In the following chapter, we revisit Arendt's theory of political judgment, based on Kant's critique of aesthetic, reflective judgment, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how the enlarged mentality may be encouraged and how acts and deeds may be judged, aside from a notion of universal history and nature as it is conceived in the work model of freedom proper to Hegel and Marx.

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[142] Bernstein, 254-55.

Chapter Four:

The Dignity of *Doxa*: Politicizing Kant's Aesthetic Judgment

Much has been written about Arendt's creative appropriation of Kant's account of aesthetic judgment for her own account of political judgment, especially following the posthumous publication of Arendt's lecture notes from her 1970 course on Kant, given at the New School for Social Research. Arendt died in 1975, just as she was about to embark on writing a volume on the faculty of "Judgment," to follow the first two completed tomes on "Thinking" and "Willing," which are posthumously gathered in *The Life of the Mind*. We can piece together Arendt's account of judgment not only from the lecture notes on Kant, published in 1982 as *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* along with Ronald Beiner's interpretive essay, but also from passages in Arendt's essay "Thinking and Moral Considerations," written at the same time as "Thinking," as well as from earlier texts published during her lifetime, notably "The Crisis in Culture" and "Truth and Politics," both from *Between Past and Future*.

Arendt calls Kant's *Critique of Judgment* his unwritten political philosophy. According to Arendt, however, Kant did not realize the political implications of his third *Critique*. Ronald Beiner, Patrick Riley, Paul Ricoeur, and others have criticized Arendt for ignoring Kant's written political philosophy, one intimately connected to his account of practical reason and his philosophy of history, as developed in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, *Eternal Peace*, *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View*, and the *Rechtslehre*.

Riley explains that Kant's politics are dedicated to the legal realization of moral ends in an everlasting peace, particularly through the establishment of constitutional republican states.[1] According to Beiner, Arendt largely ignores these sources in favor of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, in order to anticipate her own political philosophy.[2] Ricoeur, similarly, sees in Kant's *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View* a political philosophy developed along with a philosophy of history understood in terms of natural teleology. According to Ricoeur, Kant sets the political task of human beings, according to their natural disposition, toward establishing world citizenship and a cosmopolitan, peaceful order. Nature imposes the problem of unsocial sociability along with the disposition toward a cosmopolitan order that would solve it, through the universal administration of the moral law.[3] It would thus appear that a theory of judgment based on Kant would be inseparable from a notion of natural and historical teleology, or practical reason. However, in basing her theory of judgment on Kant's aesthetics, this separation is precisely what Arendt attempts.

This chapter focuses on Arendt's theory of judgment, as she develops it through her idiosyncratic adoption of Kantian categories in his third *Critique*. Arendt admits that taste, something private, immediate, and difficult to justify to others, seems a strange basis for the judgment of right and wrong, beautiful and ugly. But Kant's aesthetic judgment of beauty serves as a fruitful basis through which Arendt develops an account of political judgment because both are concerned with validating opinions about public phenomena experienced from different perspectives, opinions that seek the assent of others without being able to redeem their validity with the certainty of rational, logical truth. Beiner writes that Arendt's lectures on Kant reveal Arendt's own "determination to secure human dignity against a dual assault: the ancient Platonic disdain for the opinions of the cave, and the modern historicist tendency to reduce the particular stories enacted by human agents to a universal drama of historical progress."[4]

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[1] Riley, "Hannah Arendt on Kant, Truth and Politics," 390.
[2] Beiner, "Rereading Hannah Arendt's Kant Lectures," 93-94.
[3] Ricoeur, "Aesthetic Judgment and Political Judgment," 101.

Since the publication of Arendt's *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, a number of critical interpretive collections have appeared, commenting on Arendt's application of Kantian aesthetics to the phenomenon of reflective political judgment. Arendt's theory of judgment has been read in many different ways, depending on where the categories of actor and spectator are interpreted as residing in actual human beings. Some writers have applied it to theories of discourse ethics, engaging it to rethink the phenomena of public argument and opinion formation, while others have questioned how it might offer a model of moral judgment by which a prospective actor may assess the moral validity of his intended acts. Others have read it as an analysis of how actors and their deeds are retrospectively interpreted in a community of spectators, how the meanings of deeds and the identities of actors become historical examples to inspire future actions and interpretations.

Arendt explains that the positions of actor and spectator can reside in the same person. One individual can engage in both action and judgment at different moments, but Arendt carefully distinguishes these positions when speaking of any given act, most importantly in terms of each position's role in the generation of meaning. This careful distinction is part of what sets Arendtian judgment apart from practical reason. Only in a specific instance does the actor and spectator become one in Arendt's account of Kant, an instance in which both are inspired by the same principle of an original compact of mankind, but Arendt remains equivocal in her reading of this special case and its relation to grand progress narratives, as we will see further in this chapter.

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[4] Beiner, "Rereading Hannah Arendt's Kant Lectures," 98.

Beiner argues that in some moments in Arendt's writing, particularly during the 1960's ("Freedom and Politics," "The Crisis of Culture," "Truth and Politics"), reflective judgment is explained primarily as a faculty of the actor. It allows human beings to act and speak in a way that imagines the standpoint of others. Arendt writes that the Greeks called this ability *phronesis*, implying that reflective judgment, for the actor, is a form of practical reasoning in particular situations, in order to test the validity of actions in advance.[5] Judgment here is a moral-ethical faculty. It is as though the actor anticipates his own act and judges its validity as a theoretical, internalized spectator, before acting. Judgment is involved in the actor's imagining of potential spectators and their judgments, the identification of principles that might guide his action. In her lectures on Kant, however, Arendt decisively separates judgment from Kantian practical reason, even if judgment here remains a moral-ethical faculty that is available to the actor, as well as the spectator. In this chapter, we will explore Arendt's subtle distinction between practical reason and reflective judgment as a guide to action.

In other moments of Arendt's writing, particularly in the Kant lectures and "Thinking and Moral Considerations," the faculty of judgment is mostly depicted as a faculty of the spectator.[6] However, even in the 1960's, judgment is, in places, explained as the faculty by which the spectator retrospectively assesses the validity, the virtuosity, and the meaning of the actor's performance, in a community of spectators. From the seat of the spectator, reflective judgment guides the retrospective, intersubjective construction and revision of the narrative of the actor's words and deeds, how his acts and subsequently his public or *valid* self appears to the political community and to historical memory. In this context, Arendt holds that judgment is the faculty of dealing with the past. Already in "Truth and Politics" Arendt writes: "The political function of the storyteller – historian or novelist – is to teach acceptance of things as they are. Out of this acceptance, which can also be called truthfulness, arises the faculty of judgment."[7] The spectator's judgment of past deeds is ethically relevant in that it can reclaim the dignity of the deed and of the actor in the face of forces that might cause its forgetting, concealment, or misinterpretation. For Arendt, the notion of progressive history is such a force, as she relates in *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*:

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[5] Arendt, "Crisis in Culture," 221.

> If judgment is our faculty for dealing with the past, the historian is the inquiring man who by relating it sits in judgment over it. If that is so, we may reclaim our human dignity, win it back, as it were, from the pseudo-divinity named History of the modern age, without denying history's importance but denying its right to be the ultimate judge.[8]

While we reserve until next chapter our discussion of Arendt's fragmentary historiography and its relation to the thought of Hegel, Benjamin, and Kafka, it is important to keep in mind that Arendt's account of judgment is intimately bound up with her critique of modern progress narratives and her underlying understanding of time. Within her account of reflective judgment, her emphasis on the articulation of universals from the unprecedented givenness of the particular, as well as her insistence on the intersubjective and revisable nature of spectator judgments, is essential to her critique of historicism. Arendt also insists that the spectator judges an act according to what it discloses about the actor and mankind in general, not according to how the act fits within a larger natural or historical process, nor in relation to its causes and long-run effects, but within the act itself. Like the Greek spectator she describes, Arendt seeks to find the meaning of the "cosmos of the particular event in its own terms, without relating it to any larger process in which it may or may not play a part."[9]

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[6] Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging," 92.

[7] Arendt, "Truth and Politics," in *Between Past and Future*, 262.

[8] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 5.

Within the larger discussion of interpreters of Arendt's theory of judgment, this chapter focuses on how the judging faculty, as Arendt explains it, discloses the *who* and the *world* of both the actor and the spectator. We examine here the interplay of both sides of this phenomenon of disclosure, keeping in mind that, according to Arendt, in each individual rests both an actor and a spectator. As Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves argues, the tensions and contradictions between judgment as a faculty of the actor and judgment as a faculty of the spectator are fruitful, for they are the fundamental tensions and contradictions involved in political judgment.[10]

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[9] Ibid., 56.

[10] Passerin d'Entreves, *Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, 104.

Responsibility of Judgment: Eichmann and Totalitarian Terror

Arendt's occupation with the faculty of judgment arose in her early analysis of totalitarianism, as well as through her account, first written for *The New Yorker*, of the 1961-62 trial of Adolf Eichmann, in Jerusalem. Eichmann was a Nazi bureaucrat responsible for organizing the forced emigration of Jews, planning the transportation of Jews to concentration camps, and reporting on the mobile death squads (*Einsatzgruppen*) that followed the *Wehrmacht* into Eastern Europe. Many difficult questions concerning judgment arose in the aftermath of the publication of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, and particularly in the exchange of letters between Arendt and Gershom Scholem. What right does one have to judge when one was not present at the time and place of the act? How can a judge possibly know the complex situation facing the actor? Often judgments need to be made about events at which the spectator was not present, concerning situations the complexity of which are concealed to the standpoint of the spectator. This brings up the importance of the faculty of imagination, what Arendt calls the faculty of making present what is absent. Other questions arose following *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. What degree of impartiality is necessary for an ethical judgment, if the actor and the spectator are part of the same political community, or conversely, part of two communities in conflict? What constitutes a community of spectators?

These are difficult questions, but Arendt holds that they should not be used as excuses to avoid the responsibility to judge. In "Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship," Arendt asserts that the right and ability to judge touches on the most important moral issue. Behind the unwillingness to judge is the suspicion that no one is a free agent and that no one can be expected to answer for what he has done. Arendt suggests that humans often try to avoid the responsibility to judge by fixing blame for a deed on "historical trends and dialectical movements, in short some mysterious necessity that works behind the backs of men and bestows upon everything they do some kind of deeper meaning."[11] Curtis offers a valuable reading of the responsibility of judgment, despite this faculty's many difficulties:

> Without such an investigation of what was done and how it was justified, followed by our own judgment of their reasoning, the past will remain out of our reach, haunting and mysterious, and we will learn nothing. Judgment is the route to reconciliation based not on resignation to a fate that can neither be changed nor understood but on understanding that helps us orient ourselves toward the future and establish our present.[12]

Arendt asks how one judges the beautiful from the ugly, right from wrong, when one's social and political environment has distorted the measures traditionally depended upon for such judgment. How does one judge for one's self when the world is turned upside down, when what is morally right and what is currently legal have radically parted company, and when free public reflection among interlocutors has been made impossible under conditions of war or terror that stultify the public spaces of appearance? Another important question Arendt asks, both in her analysis of totalitarianism in general and in the context of the Eichmann trial in particular, is how one understands and explains events and how one assigns responsibility for acts when the nature of an act and its situation are so unprecedented that existing conceptual, moral, and legal categories fail to do them justice. Leora Bilsky explains that as a spectator of the Eichmann trial, Arendt engaged in reflective judgment, moving from Eichmann's particular acts to the new concepts of "bureaucratic criminal" and the "banality of evil." Arendt saw the uniqueness of Eichmann's acts and the misfit between them and the old universals of the legal system that the judges in Jerusalem tried to apply to them.[13] David Luban suggests that Arendt offers an alternative procedure of political explanation in the face of dark times in which traditional forms of explanation no longer illuminate, but rather deduce the unprecedented from universal categories so that the impact of experience of reality is no longer felt. Luban writes that Arendt understood that historical circumstances determine the very possibility of explanation, so that a timeless true and objective theory is always bound by the circumstances of its origin. The ideal of explanation should thus not be scientific detachment of the self, but an honesty and disinterest that allows the spectator to narrate an event as it happened.[14] Arendt's reading of Kantian reflective judgment thus presents an account of the judgment of particular events without the reliability of determining universals, while it explores the tensions and challenges of such a task. In this way, Arendt responds to what she sees as one of the chief problems of modern theory. In a 1969 lecture at the New School entitled "Philosophy and Politics: What Is Political Philosophy?" Arendt explains the general theory of our time as no longer concerned with truth, but only with making facts manageable:

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[11] Arendt, "Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship," in *Responsibility and Judgment*, 20.
[12] Curtis, 134.

> Facts or data become manageable if they can be leveled down to a common denominator so that we can start reckoning with them. And the presupposition

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[13] Bilsky, "When Actor and Spectator Meet in the Courtroom," 266-67.
[14] Luban, "Explaining Dark Times," 80-81.

> to this is to liquidate the distinction between quantity and quality [...] Hence, the point is not that these theories are too abstract, but that they lose the realities by dissolving one into another.[15]

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt writes that a chief characteristic of the modern masses that made them susceptible to totalitarian propaganda was that they did not believe in the reality of their own experience, but instead let their imaginations be caught up by universal concepts or explanatory accounts contrary to experience but consistent within themselves. They were convinced by the consistency of a system, by ideologies that could explain random facts and events as examples of history or nature, omnipotent forces supposed to lie at the root of all accident.[16] The agents of totalitarian terror suggested that the objectively guilty were those who stood in the way of the historical or natural processes. The murderers were not deemed subjectively guilty, however, "because they do not really murder but execute a death sentence pronounced by some higher tribunal."[17] It became a priority of Arendt to rethink the faculty of judgment as an autonomous human possibility, so that one could decide what was beautiful, ugly, right, or wrong, without appealing to the long-run laws of nature or history, especially as these laws are expressed by rulers to fit their political objectives. In "Political Responsibility Under Dictatorship," Arendt argues that the moral issue in the 1930s and 1940s arose with the phenomenon of coordination, when many public figures changed opinion overnight, impressed by Nazi political and military success, unable to judge for themselves against the verdict of history.[18]

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[15] Arendt, "Philosophy and Politics, What is Political Philosophy?" image 3.

[16] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 351-52.

[17] Ibid., 465.

[18] Arendt, "Political Responsibility Under Dictatorship," 24.

Arendt's judge is, therefore, always a particular and situated individual in company with other judges. So that judgment pays heed to the particular phenomenal integrity of the act, rather than allow itself to be pre-determined by self-consistent concepts and explanatory accounts, the model of judgment that Arendt proposes starts out from the immediate sense experience of the spectator. Arendt also emphasizes the importance of a respect for facticity, so that spectator interpretations of events illuminate, rather than distort, the past and present. In "Truth and Politics" she writes: "Freedom of opinion is a farce unless factual information is guaranteed and the facts themselves are not in dispute."[19]

Arendt develops her account of judgment in an interpretation of Kant's *Critique of Judgment,* rather than his *Critique of Practical Reason*, partly because only in the third *Critique* do situated individuals with senses and capabilities, rather than a noumenal subject, encounter phenomena in a world of appearance, along with others, whose sense of these appearances are immediately partial. The spectator's impression of the significance of what he experiences is then compared to the imagined potential judgments of other differentially situated spectators, so that its meaning is constructed and refined from the standpoints of various disinterested spectators, but always closely related to the phenomenon of the act or event. Because the actual judgments of others can themselves be distorted by subjective prejudices or political pressures, Arendt always emphasizes judgment's autonomy vis-à-vis the empirical judgments of others. The tension between the actual community of judgment and the imagined original community of judgment will also be explored in this chapter.

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[19] Arendt, "Truth and Politics," 238.

The Impartial Spectator and the Original Genius

Like Kant, Arendt sees the spectator, rather than the actor, as the final arbiter of the meaning of action. This is due to the spectator's disinterested, impartial view of the situational context of action and of the reactions it provokes. It is also due to the very requirement of witnesses for a space of appearance. In her earlier work, *The Human Condition*, Arendt holds that actors constitute the space of appearance. However, in her lectures on Kant, Arendt places larger importance on the constitutive witness of spectators:

> The condition *sine qua non* for the existence of beautiful objects is communicability; the judgment of the spectator creates the space without which no such objects could appear at all. The public realm is constituted by the critics and the spectators, not by the actors or the makers.[20]

In response to Arendt, Kristeva writes: "That plurality is a plurality of spectators is a notion that goes back to Pythagoras: the actor playing a role must sustain the illusion, and the spectators alone are able to see the whole scene."[21] Kristeva refers to Arendt's relating of Pythagoras' parable: "Life…is like a festival; just as some come to the festival to compete, some to ply their trade, but the best people come as spectators [*theatai*], so in life the slavish men go hunting for fame [*doxa*] or gain, the philosophers for truth."[22] Arendt also traces the origin of the disinterested pursuit of truth to Homer's account of the deeds and destinies of both the Trojans and the Achaeans, both Hector and Achilles, told with an impartiality that looks "with equal eyes upon friend and foe, upon success and defeat."[23] The notion that the spectator is the final arbiter of an act's meaning emerges in Kant's account of the relation between *taste* and *genius*. Ricoeur writes:

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[20] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 63.
[21] Kristeva, 222-23.
[22] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 55.

> This competition between taste and genius will be of the greatest importance for us when we transpose it to the plane of political judgment. It will become, in the hands of Hannah Arendt, the competition between a cosmopolitan spectator and the agent of history.[24]

In *The Critique of Judgment*, Kant explains genius as the innate talent, mental disposition, or harmony of faculties, through which nature gives the rule to art. Genius produces that for which no rule can be given; it is marked by originality.[25] Thus, the rule given to genius by nature cannot be a formula that would conceptually determine the beauty of the genius' work or act. As Arendt reads Kant, *spirit*, as "that which inspires the genius and only him,"[26] enables genius to find an expression by which his state of mind may be communicable. Certain wordless representations arouse a state of mind, and genius makes this state of mind communicable. *Spirit* requires seizing the quick play of imagination and unifying it with an original concept that furnishes a new rule that can be communicated without the constraint of any other rules.[27]

The faculty that guides this communicability is taste. However, taste is not the privilege of the genius, but is shared by the spectator.[28] As with Arendt's retrospective narrator, Kant's spectator must abstract the rule from the work of the genius.[29] For Kant, the originality of genius is less necessary to beauty than the accordance of the spectator's imagination with the law of the understanding: "For all the abundance of the former produces in lawless freedom nothing but nonsense; on the other hand, the Judgment is the faculty by which it is adjusted to the Understanding."[30] Taste "clips the wings" of genius, limits it so that it might remain subjectively purposive, or intelligible to the spectator. Taste makes genius susceptible to imperishability and universal assent, "and capable of being followed by others, and of an ever-progressive culture."[31] The product of genius, clipped by the spectator, serves as an example that hands down the rule to posterity, a standard of judgment for others.[32] Anthony Cascardi writes: "Arendt's 'exemplar' and 'genius' establish not just a new law or a paradigm of lawfulness, they regularize or objectify creativity itself, which is also to say that the 'exemplary' work of the genius proves valid insofar as it establishes a succession of followers."[33]

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[23] Arendt, "Truth and Politics," 263.
[24] Ricoeur, "Aesthetic Judgment and Political Judgment," 100.
[25] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §46, 188-190.
[26] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 63.
[27] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §49, 197-205.
[28] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 62-63.

The relation between genius and taste remains consistent with Arendt's decentered, non-sovereign model of disclosure of *who* the actor is. The *who* is disclosed in the reaction that the actor's deed provokes in the spectator. As Beiner explains, "Judgment, as it were, confirms the being of that which has been disclosed."[34] Kant's rule-giving voice of nature, the *spirit* that inspires genius, is similar to the *daimon* seen by spectators behind the backs of actors in Arendt's account of disclosive action. Kant writes that the common usage of the word "genius" is derived from "that peculiar guiding spirit given to a man at his birth, from whose suggestion these original Ideas proceed."[35] Like the *daimon*, *genius* is depicted as a birth attendant that whispers inspiration to the actor.

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[29] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §47, 190-93.
[30] Ibid., §50, 205.
[31] Ibid., §50, 206.
[32] Ibid., §47, 190-93.
[33] Cascardi, "Communication and Transformation," 124.
[34] Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging," 111.

The *daimon* represents duality within the *who*, an uncanny double. It thus encompasses the existence of the imagined, prospective spectator that dwells within the actor. Arendt argues that since taste is the faculty that guides the communicability of genius, the actor must imagine his own prospective judges in order to make himself understood. The actor's originality and intelligibility depend on it: "[T]his critic and spectator sits in every actor and fabricator; without this critical, judging faculty the doer or maker would be so isolated from the spectator that he would not even be perceived."[36] The intelligibility of genius, as set by the understanding of the spectator, sets a limit to the otherwise radical spontaneity of action. The *who* disclosed by the actor depends on how he appears to the spectator. Conversely, the spectator judges *who* is disclosed, judges the meaning of the actor's deeds, in disinterested freedom. We may learn more about what spectator disinterest consists of by exploring the structure of aesthetic, reflective judgments.

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[35] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §46, 190.

[36] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 63.

Reflective Judgment and the *Sensus Communis*

Arendt makes the claim that political judgments – judgments about the meaning of acts and events, about what is beautiful or ugly as disclosed within the public sphere, or about what is right or wrong – are all *reflective* rather than *determinant* judgments. Spectators of a political act face the challenge of judging the act's meaning or virtuosity without the solidity of universal measures under which to subsume it. Political judgments are thus made in the same way as judgments of taste, as discovered by Kant in *The Critique of Judgment*. According to Arendt, Kant discovered the faculty of reflective judgment at work behind the phenomenon of taste. Early in the work, Kant distinguishes between determinant and reflective judgments:

> Judgment in general is the faculty of thinking the particular as contained under the Universal. If the universal (the rule, the principle, the law) be given, the Judgment which subsumes the particular under it…is *determinant*. But if only the particular be given for which the universal has to be found, the Judgment is merely *reflective*.[37]

The faculty of reflective judgment deals with particulars that cannot be subsumed under general, or universal, categories. The example *par excellence* of such a particular, for both Kant and Arendt, is any given object that the spectator judges as beautiful. Kant writes that in the case of an object whose form, in the mere reflection upon it without reference to any concept, is judged as the ground of a pleasure, this pleasure is judged as bound up with the representation and as valid for every judging being. The object is then called beautiful.[38] The spectator judges the particular rose, for instance, to be beautiful, without arriving at this conclusion by judging that the particular rose can be adequately subsumed under a general category of beauty. Kant posits that there is no rule or concept by which one can convince another to recognize that something is beautiful, no objective principle under which one can subsume the concept of an object and infer by syllogism that it is beautiful. One must feel pleasure in the representation of the object, something that cannot be persuaded by empirical proof or logic.[39] Spectators wish to submit the object to their own eyes. The judgment of taste is not logical, it is not grounded by something objective in the representation. It is rather aesthetical, its determining ground is subjective, a feeling of pleasure or pain, which is not part of the object *per se*.[40] Ricoeur suggests why Kant prioritizes aesthetic over teleological judgment in the analytic of the beautiful:

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[37] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §IV, 16-17.
[38] Ibid., §VII, 31.

> [T]he natural order thought in terms of the idea of finality itself has an *aesthetic* dimension in virtue of its very relation to the subject and not to the object. [...] What assures a certain primacy to the judgment of taste in relation to the teleological judgment is the more immediately recognizable kinship between the beautiful and our expectation of a pure pleasure.[41]

In explaining the dialectic, or antinomy, of aesthetic judgment, Kant posits that the judgment of taste is not based on determinate concepts; otherwise, it would be determinable by proof. On the other hand, judgment of taste *is* based on indeterminate concepts; otherwise, we would not claim the necessary assent of others.[42] It is impossible to give an objective principle of taste, from which judgments could be derived. But, the subjective principle, “the indefinite Idea of the supersensible in us, can only be put forward as the sole key to the puzzle of this faculty whose sources are hidden from us."[43]

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[39] Ibid., §34, 159-60.
[40] Ibid., §1, 45-46.
[41] Ricoeur, “Aesthetic Judgment and Political Judgment,” 95-96.
[42] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §56, 230-31.

Like Kant's aesthetic judgment, Arendt's notion of political judgment falls between the cognitive assent of a compelling, objective truth claim, and something purely subjective. According to Arendt, in politics as in art, what is judged is not so much a matter of cognition and truth, but of meaning, a distinction adopted from Kant. While the meaning of an act cannot be proven, it can be validated intersubjectively. The spectator aims to persuade others of the validity of his judgment or opinion, but cannot compel or coerce. In this way opinion is different from physical violence, but also from logical or empirical truth, which, by Arendt's understanding, also compels in a way that brings an end to an exchange of opinion.[44]

Intersubjective validity is not the same as universal truth, apprehended cognitively, or scientific truth, verified by the repetition of experiments.[45] Such truth, argues Arendt, cannot hope to be attained within the realm of human action and judgment, ruled as it is by plurality, natality, and *doxa*. As early as *The Human Condition*, Arendt writes: "The end of the common world has come when it is seen only under one aspect and is permitted to present itself in only one perspective."[46] However, intersubjective, public validity raises judgment above mere subjectivity. In Benhabib's words, Arendt's ethic of radical intersubjectivity decenters primary narcissism.[47] Like Socrates and Kant before her, Arendt insists on the public and dialogical nature of critique, as well as the notion that truth in human affairs is that which is communicable. Public critique assumes that spectators are willing to account for their judgments, to be responsible for them before others. Publicity, necessary for critical thinking, extracts the latent implications of every statement of opinion. This critical examination presupposes that one may give an account of his opinion, not prove it, but be able to explain how he came to the opinion, by what reasons he formed it, so that he may be held responsible for his opinion. The self-application of critical standards of thought cannot occur without "the testing that arises from contact with other people's thinking."[48] The ideal of judgment is disinterest or impartiality, an ideal that can be arrived at by taking the possible judgments of all other spectators in the judging community into consideration. Thus, "impartiality is not the result of some higher standpoint that would then actually settle the dispute by being altogether above the melée."[49] What validates the spectator's opinion or account is not a general concept that can determinately subsume particulars, but is, rather, connected to the particularity of the standpoints of the other spectators whose position he visits in formulating his account, as well as closely connected to the given particularity, the phenomenal integrity, of the object of judgment.[50] It is a reflective judgment.

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[43] Ibid., §57, 234.
[44] Arendt, "Crisis in Culture," 223.
[45] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 40.
[46] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 53.

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[47] Benhabib, 196.
[48] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 42.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 44.

What brings taste out of its irreducible subjectivity and into the world of common sense is *imagination*. To prepare an object of taste for judgment, imagination works in one of two ways. If the judgment concerns events well in the past, imagination makes these absent events present for reflection in the inner sense; it is the condition for memory.[51] Imagination is, alternatively, the ability to transform a present object of perception into a representation upon which the spectator can further reflect. Imagination allows spectators to gain a necessary representational distance from the sensuous object of judgment, to mediate, with conceptual thought, one's initially immediate discriminatory taste, one that is private, affective, undisputable, and non-communicable.[52] The spectator may then reflect upon the representation from a more disinterested standpoint, to impartially assess its proper worth or meaning. Kant writes that in the pure aesthetical judgment, the judge's cognitive and representative powers have a degree of free play because they are undetermined by immediate sensuous desire. Arendt writes: "These sensations are private; also, no judgment is involved: we are merely passive, we react, we are not spontaneous, as we are when we imagine something at will or reflect on it."[53] According to Kant, the gratification of sensuous desire generates a want and it becomes the interest of the subject to satisfy it. If someone has an unappeased want, one has difficulty in exercising taste, as much would gratify the hunger. This notion hearkens back to Arendt's idea that impartial judgment, that which adequately judges the beauty of an act or object, must be made separate of questions of need. There is, in this aspect of

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[51] Ibid., 80.
[52] Ibid., 66-68.
[53] Ibid., 70.

Arendt's theory of judgment, a material basis to the necessary conditions of impartial, disinterested judgment:

> This distance cannot arise unless we are in a position to forget ourselves, the cares and interests and urges of our lives, so that we will not seize what we admire but let it be as it is, in its appearance. This attitude of disinterested joy (to use the Kantian term, *uninteressiertes Wohlgefallen*) can be experienced only after the needs of the living organism have been provided for, so that, released from life's necessity, men may be free for the world.[54]

In another seminar on Kant offered at the New School in 1970, Arendt posits a connection between Kantian imagination and *nous*. Through this faculty, man becomes aware of surplus Being which does not appear in physical reality, but "is given to the mind as the nonappearance in the appearances."[55] In creating a representation, the imagination prepares the sensuous object for reflection upon this representation, the actual activity of judgment. In doing so, the spectator can judge according to a surplus of what physically appears, according to what is constitutive of the meaning of the phenomenon, of what is disclosed of the *who* and of the world. Imagination is required for the spectator to see the *genius*, the *daimon*, behind the back of the actor.

But disinterested judgment cannot be guaranteed after this first representational mediation of sense experience. The way one spectator represents the phenomenon to himself, and the way in which he proceeds to judge it, may be different for all other spectators. Arendt emphasizes this point in her ever-present notion of plurality. The standpoints of others consist in the "conditions they are subject to, which always differ from one individual to the next, from one class or group as compared to another."[56] Speaking metaphorically, each spectator is positioned differently within the theatre and each arrives as a different individual. Each spectator's formation of conceptual representations and subsequent judgments may be affected by such diverse determinants as the language through which he reflects, cultural milieu, educational history, economic class, gender, significant early or later life experiences, as well as personal and political commitments. One spectator might see the event with his own eyes, while another spectator is confronted with an earlier spectator's account of the act – perhaps days later, perhaps a century later.

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[54] Arendt, "Crisis in Culture," 210.

[55] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 80.

How do we overcome the impasse at which judgments remain irreducibly particular to each spectator? Arendt posits that reflection requires the abstraction from the contingencies of one's own subjective conditions of judgment, from one's own self-interest. She understands interest, in this context, as *usefulness*.[57] Overcoming the relativity of taste thus involves judging objects in a way that suspends considerations of their instrumentality with regards to one's self. This allows the spectator to judge the meaning of action and speech for their revelatory or disclosive power. Arriving at a point of disinterest also involves suspending the logic of moral imperatives. Kant writes that the exertion of taste bears a degree of free play that is lacking in moral reasoning. He explains judgments of beauty to be free from the imperative of moral law, whereas moral reason generates an interest in the respect of the good that categorically forces the subject's assent. If one is bound by the moral law, he does not have the freedom to disinterestedly exhibit his taste.[58] Arendt writes that moral judgments, according to Kant, "are necessary: they are dictated by practical reason. They might be communicated, but this communication is secondary; even if they could not be communicated, they would remain valid."[59]

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[56] Ibid., 43.
[57] Ibid., 73.

Conversely, in reflective judgments, the spectator must either approve or disapprove of his initial, immediate taste. The criterion for approbation or disapprobation of one's initial taste, the requirement for verification of taste's validity, is its *communicability*.[60] By comparing one's initial representation and judgment to those which one imagines making in the position of other spectators, one abstracts from one's own limiting contingencies. The spectator's mentality is enlarged. Further, judgments are made not merely as a willful declaration of one's opinion, irrespective of the opinions of others. Rather, a judgment is made in order that other spectators might assent to it. The spectator tries to "woo the consent" of others.[61] By Kristeva's interpretation, disinterested taste becomes imputed to all spectators as a duty, a form of universal repression. It effaces extravagant singularity, libertine or romantic excesses, and submits them to the imperative of a communitarian prohibition.[62]

Kant relates the communicability of taste to the *sensus communis*, the idea of a sense common to all men. He explains the *sensus communis* as a faculty of judgment, which in its reflection takes *a priori* account of the modes of representation of all other men, in order to compare one's own judgment with the collective reason of humanity.[63] Kant holds that the spectator, insofar as he is a member of a community, always makes reflective judgments. He writes that if we admit man's *sociability*, we regard taste as a means of furthering man's natural inclination to society. According to Arendt, Kant found that man's judgment requires the company of society, that spectators exist only in the plural.[64] The vision of man that Kant's aesthetic judgment appeals to is man insofar as he is earthbound, endowed with a community sense, not autonomous, but in need of the presence of others and the freedom of public opinion for thinking itself.[65] But the Kantian *sensus communis* is at work *a priori,* when the understanding subsumes the intuitions of the imagination: "Taste is then the faculty of judging *a priori* of the communicability of feelings that are bound up with a given representation (without the mediation of a concept)."[66] For Kant, the pleasure one feels toward a representation of a beautiful object is based on the communicability of the representation. It is the capability of communicating the mental state in the representation that is key to experiencing disinterested pleasure in the object.[67] One forms their judgment according to the universal conditions of the faculty of judgment. The ground of pleasure is found in the universal condition of reflective judgments, the purposive harmony between an object and the mutual harmony of the cognitive faculties involved in the judgment: *imagination* and *understanding*.[68] Imagination gathers the manifold of sense intuition, while understanding unites the representations under a concept. The validity of judgments of taste rests on the sensation of the harmonious subsumption of the free imagination that represents the object without any concept, under the conditions of the understanding, with its conformity to law. This subsumption is required to pass from subjective intuition to communicable, universal concepts.[69]

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[58] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §5, 55.
[59] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 70.
[60] Ibid., 69.
[61] Ibid., 72.
[62] Kristeva, 225-26.

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[63] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §40, 170-71.
[64] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 63.
[65] Ibid., 27.
[66] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §40, 173.
[67] Ibid., §9, 63-67.
[68] Ibid., §VII, 32-33.

Kant writes that whereas what is pleasant to the senses can remain pleasant to one man and not the next, when we say something is beautiful, we demand the agreement of others. Kant posits that because one's satisfaction is disinterested, since it does not rest on the particular inclination of the judge, one's judgment is grounds for the satisfaction of all men. One judge's satisfaction is grounded on what he can presuppose in every other person. He thus has reason to attribute similar satisfaction to every one. He may thus impute *subjective universal validity* to his judgment, speaking of the beautiful as if it were an objective trait of the thing, linking concept to object, even though the judgment remains aesthetical, referring to the subjective representation of the thing and to the judge's feeling of pleasure. The spectator imputes the assent of others to his opinion whether or not it actually conforms to the empirical judgment of others. Kant writes: "Again, every one expects and requires from every one else this reference to universal communication [of pleasure], as it were from an original compact dictated by humanity itself."[70]

Ricoeur writes that Kant's analytic of the beautiful presents two paradoxes when it refers reflective judgment to the state of free play of representative faculties, rather than to the objective property of the beautiful thing in itself. The first paradox is that something can please without concepts, without intention or any claim to objective truth. The only intention is reflective; it only concerns the free play of imagination and understanding. The second paradox is contained in the notion of finality without end, a finality consisting of the internal composition of parts that are mutually adjusted to each other and to the whole. This kind of finality is found in the second part of the Critique concerning the organization of living beings. Thus, Ricoeur suggests that there is a natural finality, a natural disposition, of men toward each other, seen in their sociability, and toward the whole, toward a cosmopolitan unity. He finds it very audacious to claim universality as *communicability,* detached from any antecedent objectivity and universality, and writes that it is this new paradox of communicability as instituting universality that is taken from the aesthetic sphere and applied to other domains of judgment, including the political and historical.[71]

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[69] Ibid., §35, 161-62.
[70] Ibid., §41, 175.

For both Kant and Arendt, judging according to the *sensus communis* is not to simply adopt the opinions of others. Kant writes that the subjective universal validity of a judgment of taste is not based on the collecting of the empirical judgments of others or on questioning others as to the sensations they have experienced, but on the autonomy of the judging subject.[72] The other grounds are heteronomous. As Beiner notes, Kant is concerned with how one addresses one's self to an ideal community of fellow judges without forfeiting one's own responsibility as an individual judge.[73] Similarly, Arendt says that spectators cannot reconcile empirical judgments, but only form their own judgments from the imagined general perspective. In her lectures on Kant, Arendt suggests that empathy – to accept what goes on in the minds of others – is merely to replace one's prejudices with those of others.[74] The power of judgment according to an enlarged mentality is in the potential agreement of judgments, not in their actual, empirical agreement. As early as "Truth and Politics," Arendt's emphasis, like Kant's, is on the autonomy of judgment:

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[71] Ricoeur, "Aesthetic Judgment and Political Judgment," 96-98.
[72] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §31, 153.

> This process of representation does not blindly adopt the actual views of those who stand somewhere else, and hence look upon the world from a different perspective; this is a question neither of empathy, as though I tried to be or to feel like somebody else, nor of counting noses and joining a majority but of being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not.[75]

As Disch notes, even after the spectator visits the standpoints of others, he still must judge for himself, so the tension between one spectator's place and the enlarged mentality is never resolved.[76] Similarly, Benhabib suggests an inconclusive tension between solitary thinking as the subject's inner consistency and intersubjective judging as enlarging one's mentality by taking in the pluralistic perspectives of the world.[77] This tension has its advantages and disadvantages. One benefit is that in its emphasis on the autonomy and imaginative capacity of each spectator, one can make a free judgment even if the case seems decided in advance, even if one's judgment opposes the majority of empirical judgments. A further advantage, as Nancy Fraser notes, is that plurality is adequately recognized and preserved: "By appreciating that it always remains I who is 'visiting,' I avoid obliterating the line between self and other and I preserve the alterity of the others."[78]

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[73] Beiner, "Rereading Hannah Arendt's Kant Lectures," 98.
[74] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 43.
[75] Arendt, "Truth and Politics," 241.
[76] Disch, 156.
[77] Benhabib, 191.

For Kant, the *sensus communis* and enlarged mentality are transcendental conditions of intersubjective validity, but they do not relate judgments to any empirical sociability, only the sociability of the universal community of noumenal subjects that share the mental faculties with which to judge. For Kant, empirical sociability contributes nothing to the validity of our judgments. Beiner raises the question of whether Kant's theory of judgment is then suitable for thinking about political judgment, which is dialogical, not monological, and is between real interlocutors in particular communities.[79]

Some interpreters posit that while Kant's notion of *sensus communis* is transcendental, *a priori*, and based on shared faculties of imagination and understanding, Arendt detranscendentalizes the *sensus communis*, defining it as the shared sense of an actual judging community that shares the same world. One of the pleasures of beauty is that it can be communicated, and this depends not only on the shared faculties of the spectators, as Kant posits, but also a common world, as Arendt argues:

> In aesthetic no less than in political judgments, a decision is made, and although this decision is always determined by a certain subjectivity, by the simple fact that each person occupies a place of his own from which he looks upon and judges the world, it also derives from the fact that the world itself is an objective datum, something common to all its inhabitants.[80]

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[78] Fraser, "Communication, Transformation, and Consciousness-Raising," 171.

[79] Beiner, "Rereading Hannah Arendt's Kant Lectures," 96-97.

[80] Arendt, "Crisis in Culture," 222.

According to Arendt, while the self-consistency of practical reason can be achieved monologically, reflective judgment requires that one "go visiting" other perspectives: "As logic, to be sound, depends on the presence of the self, so judgment, to be valid, depends on the presence of others."[81] For Arendt, the validity of judgments stretches only to those spectators whose positions have been visited: "Hence judgment is endowed with a certain specific validity, but is never universally valid. Its claims to validity can never extend further than the others in whose place the judging person has put himself for his considerations."[82] The greater the reach of one's visiting, the more general his thinking will be. Similarly, the larger the community to which a spectator can communicate a judgment or relate a valid example, "the greater is the worth of the object."[83]

Fraser, however, argues that Arendt's account remains too monological. The spectator only imagines himself in the position of others, instead of actually engaging in an external dialogue. This means that the spectator is denied a fuller understanding of the other's standpoint, available only through real conversation.[84] Benhabib, to overcome the limits of the monological model, proposes a political ethic of rational intersubjective institutions through which the development of the enlarged mentality actually occurs through discursive interchange.[85] However, in her lectures on Kant, Arendt speaks of an actual discursive community, one that would be visited not only mentally, but communicatively: "Now communicability obviously implies a community of men who can be addressed and who are listening and can be listened to."[86] While the empirical opinions of actual others are not adopted uncritically, their situation and opinions are taken into account in the spectator's judgment. Fraser's objection is entirely valid insofar as actual visiting can only extend to spectators who are physically present, or whose perspectives are available. There is room in Arendt's account for the visiting of imagined spectators, in the case of judgments of acts far in the past, or the choosing of historical examples. Clearly, to imagine the standpoint of pertinent spectators of a past event would force the present spectator to make assumptions about their situations, rather than take them at their word. Fraser further asks how the spectator determines in each case what the relevant representative standpoints are to go visiting, and how the spectator can be sure that the standpoint he imagines is accurate.[87] She finds Arendt's account of judgment inadequate in that it does not take into account its "structural locatedness in contexts of inequality," the fact that individuals judge "from specific positions that are discursively, institutionally, and sociostructurally constructed along axes of dominance and subordination."[88]

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[81] Ibid., 221.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 74.
[84] Fraser, 171.
[85] Benhabib, 197.

We may ask if Arendt imputes the *sensus communis* to a particular ethical or linguistic community, so that the spectator standpoints visited, and their shared sense that could validate opinions, are restricted to that particular community. Arendt writes, after all, that the "it-pleases-or-displeases-me, which as a feeling seems so utterly private and noncommunicative, is actually rooted in this community sense."[89] What community is Arendt talking about? Does the spectator refer to a real, limited community, or an imagined, original compact of mankind? Kristeva suggests that Arendt, following Kant, tries to found an original community of spectators.[90] In questioning whether one empirical community demonstrates a particular kind of taste, Arendt turns to Pericles:

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[86] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 40.
[87] Fraser, 172.
[88] Ibid., 175.

> First, we are told distinctly that it is the polis, the realm of politics, which sets limits to the love of wisdom and of beauty, and since we know that the Greeks thought it was the polis and "politics" (and by no means superior artistic achievements) which distinguished them from the barbarians, we must conclude that this difference was a "cultural" difference as well, a difference in their mode of intercourse with "cultural" things, a different attitude toward beauty and wisdom, which could be loved only within the limits set by the institutions of the polis.[91]

In her lectures on Kant, Arendt states that one judges as a member of a community and that the *sensus communis* fits us into a community.[92] But throughout the lectures, she refers to no community more specific than the universal human community, which shares the same sense apparatus and therefore judges "not as a member of a supersensible world."[93] In an exegesis of Kant, she writes: "But in the last analysis, one is a member of a world community by the sheer fact of being human; this is one's 'cosmopolitan existence.'"[94] While these lectures make it difficult to clearly separate Arendt from Kant, to identify her own clear understanding of the judging community, Arendt's emphasis on plurality and world spectatorship, along with the absence, in these lectures, of treatment of specific ethical-linguistic communities, would imply that Arendt's judging community is formed in the process of judgment itself. One spectator must put himself in the standpoint of spectators who stand outside his own particular linguistic and ethical community. This allows for the widening of the community of spectators, and thus for the increased communicable validity of opinions. Arendt shares Kant's cosmopolitan hope, not in the ultimate convergence of opinions, but in the widening of the community of spectators and the enlargement of public thought.

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[89] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 72.
[90] Kristeva, 225.
[91] Arendt, "Crisis in Culture," 214.
[92] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 70-72.
[93] Ibid., 67-68.
[94] Ibid., 75.

The Purposes of Intersubjective Political Judgment

Arendt's interpretation of Kant has sparked much debate about the purposes of intersubjective political judgment. Is the end of judgment to build a consensus among the community of spectators, to rationally validate opinions, to assess acts and their inspiring principles according to moral and ethical standards? Or, is the end of judgment connected more closely to the process itself? Is it to develop engaged and free thinking citizens? Some readers of Arendt focus on the process of judgment as an end in itself, deliberation for its own sake. Political judgment is valued for its reproduction of the space of appearance, maintaining the process of intersubjective discourse, rather than reaching a conclusion. The building block of community in this regard is citizen engagement and agonistic disagreement, rather than consensus. The community of spectators is not conceived as an Aristotelian bearer of a harmony of judgment and substantive *ethos*, but rather a community based on free and continuous argument. Is the end of intersubjective judgment to sustain a world of common sense? Is it to disclose to spectators the world and its actors, in all their particularity and plurality?

Jürgen Habermas argues that despite what he calls Arendt's communications concept of power, her separation of opinion and rational validation of truth claims loses the potential of intersubjective illocusionary language to reach a rational consensus, one that would redeem the validity of truth claims and normative practices, correct the self-illusion of structurally-distorted understandings of held interests. Similarly, Wellmer holds that Arendt fails to pursue the internal relations between judging and the rational validation of action.[95] Habermas sees in the *sensus communis* a notion of rational consensus within a community of subjects. Opinions can be instructed by the judgments of others, so that the basis of collective solidarity may be based on rational consensus around morally valid norms. Disch argues that Habermas conceives language in instrumental terms, for coordinating the concert of different actions. For Habermas, reaching consensus and understanding is the *telos* of speech, achieved through the intersubjective power of discursive logic. Disch sees Habermas' consensus-building *telos* of language as robbing language of its disclosive potential, its power to reveal how one relates to the world, and to constitute new identities and new relationships. Whereas Habermas sees principles as prescribing limits to action, marking the boundary between the moral and the strategic, Arendt regards them as forces disclosed in action. To say that an action's principle can be validated is to reduce action to behavior by making principles analogous to motives and goals, their determining factors. According to Disch's reading of Arendt, judgment's end is not to justify an act, but to render the meaning of the inspiring principle tangible in the form of a story to be remembered and contested.[96]

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[95] Wellmer, "Hannah Arendt on Judgment," 170.

Habermas sees in Arendt a rigid separation of opinion and knowledge, of theory and practice, so that opinions cannot be validated rationally. This leaves little ground for separating public opinion from strategic propaganda and ideology. If opinions are ultimately based on taste, rather than determined by concepts that are transparent to reason, power cannot be based on the rational legitimacy of consensus, but only on the will to make promises. According to Habermas, Arendt ultimately retreats to the tradition of natural law by positing the contractual making of promises as the basis of power.[97] As Disch notes, Habermas sees in Arendt an antiquated, foundationalist conception of theoretical knowledge, based on ultimate certainties, and this is what compels her to separate knowledge from opinion. Habermas argues that truth claims and ethical norms require critical argumentation and he refuses the empiricist claim that theoretical knowledge is validated decisively by a correspondence to a reality that forecloses argumentation.[98]

Arendt refuses to admit that the ultimate legitimacy of judgments, the terms of solidarity of communicating subjects, can be decided by reason in terms of determinate concepts; first, because of the plurality of perspectives; secondly, because of the notion that there is no guaranteed, rational ground behind the appearance of opinion and deeds that can ultimately validate them. Arendt protects political maxims from absolute moral dictates, which are matters of cognition that compel, which invite no disagreement. To Arendt, giving political convictions a cognitive status would endanger the integrity of opinion and controversy. Kristeva writes that Arendt's experience with totalitarianism helps her point to a gap in positive rationality, so she expands politics to include aesthetic judgment, taste, intuition, and imagination, with a suspicion of the binding validity of knowledge in politics.[99]

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[96] Disch, 151-54.
[97] Habermas, "Hannah Arendt: Concept of Power," 184-85.
[98] Disch, 148.

Villa also opposes Habermas' reading of Arendt and Habermas' notion that communicative agreement is the end of judgment. He argues that Habermas and Benhabib share the fallacy that the removal of constraints to communication will result in general interest and public knowledge. This fallacy, he adds, has roots in Marx and Rousseau, who saw politics as faction, ideology, and class division, and preferred a harmonious will. Villa argues, along with Lyotard, that the post-Enlightenment idea of discursive winning of universal consent bears a "teleology of consensus" on the public sphere in a way that threatens plurality, spontaneity, and radical shifts in discourse that are part of Arendt's notion of natality.[100]

According to Villa, a rational redemption of the deliberative dimension of Arendt's theory of enlarged mentality comes at the cost of undercutting the initiatory and performative dimension of aesthetic judgment. It instrumentalizes action and its judgment, makes them a means for larger consensus. For Arendt, according to Villa, plurality is both the condition and the end of action and judgment. Villa does admit that Arendt's approach bears an ethical dimension, in that it rescues reflective judgment from relativism and decisionism by providing the reorientation needed to reconstruct moral horizons in terms of shared judgments.[101] In fact, Arendt's theory of judgment rescues her aestheticizing theory of action from a Nietzschean reduction of action to an expression of will to power, saves it from radical subjectivity that itself threatens the conditions of action, such as public equality, plurality, and a solid space of appearance.[102] But no criteria for validity claims can shape the arena of judgment from without; rather, this falls within judgment. Villa writes: "The significance of Kant's theory of taste judgment for politics is that it shows how a nonfoundationalist theory of judgment can in fact serve to strengthen rather than undermine our sense of a shared world of appearances."[103] Political judgment thus limits the *agon* by showing the audience what it has in common in the process of articulating their differences: not a common purpose or opinion, but a common world.

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[99] Kristeva, 229.
[100] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 70-71.

Curtis argues that Arendt's theory of judgment helps us to think about ethical responsibility in politics and allows for a deeper sense of the plurality of the world. This ethical responsibility is grounded in actively countenancing the specificity of the *who* of actors out of *oblivion*, inviting them and their relevant perspectives into common public light, "into the arena of agonistic recognition."[104] For Curtis, *who* we are appears in how we live our *what*s, for example, one's class, race, and the political dilemmas of one's time. Curtis reminds us that the *who*, as opposed to the *what*, appears only in situations of disinterested togetherness, which we can reach by suspending our expectations of how *what* others are will determine the actions we expect of them, "while at the same time retaining our knowledge of the world out of which they struggle to rise, struggle to make a specific response to our particular solicitation."[105] A deeper understanding of the situation out of which the other acts or judges requires a clear sense of what Curtis calls the *density* of the particularity of phenomenal reality. Our sense of this density can be sharpened, argues Curtis, through the transfiguration Arendt prescribes in imagination, representational thinking, and the visiting of other standpoints. Curtis holds that our aesthetic sensibility of *tragic pleasure*, our insistence on seeing the "discomfort, discontent, and pain that the world's shifting unruliness and multidimensionality provoke in us,"[106] deepens this sense. Curtis reads Arendt's notion of spectator judgment as a solicitation to respond to, to augment, the initiatory actions of others. Such renewed action requires a durable world – reliable spaces of appearance and interpretive contexts. Arendt's model of judgment provides a key to sensing the density of reality needed to sustain this durability.

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[101] Ibid., 165.
[102] Ibid., 99-102.
[103] Ibid., 105.
[104] Curtis, 142.

Similarly, Beiner writes that judgment helps render the world of appearance more durable and confirms its being. He argues that the political role of the spectator is to reconcile men to their reality that they can never master. Political judgment gives human beings a cathartic sense of hope in the possibility of new beginnings, helping to sustain them in action.[107]

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[105] Ibid., 148.
[106] Ibid., 130.
[107] Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging," 143.

Markell argues that Arendt's theory of judgment can be used to broaden the horizons of democratic citizenship. One impediment to democracy is the potentially distorted mode of appearance of events. If action is understood as events and the responses they occasion, than a threat to democracy lies in the loss of responsiveness to events, the erosion of contexts in which action makes sense.[108] There is thus a need for a *sensus communis*, an engaged citizenry, but also a proper representational distance acquired by the imagination so that events can be judged validly, and as something one can respond to. Responsiveness requires proper judgment of the meaning of events and a critical questioning of how public institutions or private corporations interpret events to preemptively render them inert and depoliticized.

In a very different reading of Arendt that interprets her as closer to Habermas, Anthony Cascardi argues that Arendt sees politics as transforming the radical agreement of the kingdom of ends into the process of soliciting agreement with others, rationalizing the passage between the noumenal and phenomenal realm, the kingdom of ends and the phenomenal space of representation. According to Cascardi, Kant's third *Critique* wishes to recognize the possibility of passing between the noumenal and the phenomenal realm as a way of realizing freedom. This progressive realization of freedom supposes a radical convergence of opinion. However, Kant concludes that while the principle of universal validity of claims of taste can be presupposed, it can never be shown or attested to as true. Arendt resolves this antinomy of taste by rooting private sense in community sense. The problem is that this presupposes the convergence of sense that reflective judgment is supposed to create. Indeed, to some interpreters of Arendt, the *sensus communis* is no longer available to us with the breakdown of traditional authority. Judgment, for Arendt, is how we rebuild a common world in its absence. Cascardi suggests that Arendt's adoption of the communicability of *sensus communis* limits the political to what can be represented to public reason. She favors rational communication, justification of acts, and normalization of community, over radical transformation and the spontaneity of action, which necessarily engages ideas beyond representation.[109] Cascardi understands the "transformative" as that which relies on feelings generated by ideas that transcend existing representations, part of the act of founding a state and the natality of action. He writes:

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[108] Markell, 12-13.

> To understand the task of politics as ensuring normativity through representability is admittedly to weaken the transformative potential and to risk rendering unintelligible the question of founding. By contrast, to view politics as "aesthetic" only insofar as it depends upon the representation of ideals that are available only to the creative genius is to risk the legislative arbitrariness that Arendt so deeply feared.[110]

Cascardi's reading brings us to the question of the sublime. He reads Arendt's attempt to save politics from irrationalism as expressed in her privileging Kant's category of the beautiful over the sublime. Kant's account of the sublime in *Critique of Judgment* "best registers the pressure of truly unpresentable ideas – including the idea of the opinion of 'everybody else' and the notion of an 'enlarged mentality' – upon our existing routines and states of affairs."[111] Arendt's image of the polis as a discursive space where the progressive convergence of opinions may take place refuses the power of the sublime to hold in check the impulse to ascribe an object to an unpresentable idea. Cascardi sees Arendt's polis as the objectification of the *sensus communis*, an unpresentable idea. Arendt thus reduces the tension in Kant between the need to represent "that which stands beyond all knowledge" and the resistance of the sublime to all representation, the impossibility of representing the idea of a final convergence of all opinion in a kingdom of ends.[112] According to Cascardi, an account of reflective judgment adequate to the transformative power of the aesthetic would "be an account in which both the pleasures remembered in the beautiful and the common sense presupposed by judgments of taste were paired with the pain felt at the inability to represent what is beyond all knowledge (in Arendt's terms, the opinions and feelings of 'everyone else.')"[113]

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[109] Cascardi, 107-14.
[110] Ibid., 126.

In Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime," he describes the sublime as formless and boundless, beyond all standards of magnitude external to itself; it is the absolutely great. But its totality can be thought. Judgment uses certain objects to make present to the mind the feeling of the sublime. Man imagines infinite progress and makes present to reason the idea of absolute totality, but no representation of this idea is adequate. The sublime is felt by the subject as an impasse, a limit. While its magnitude, its infinity, can be conceived abstractly by reason, it cannot be represented, not objectified for sense. The sublime excites the mind because it violates purpose, does violence to the imagination because it is unsuited for man's "presentative faculty." The mind is both attracted and repelled by the sublime object. Its satisfaction is one of respect.[114]

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[111] Ibid., 111.
[112] Ibid., 109.
[113] Ibid., 121.

According to Kant, to feel the sublime, one needs an attunement to moral ideas. Judging of the sublime pleases on behalf of the purposes of practical reason. Here, the imagination uses nature as a schema.[115] Man imagines nature as the fulfillment of the purpose of these supersensible ideas. However, he sees that nature lacks that absolute magnitude that his reason desires. Man sees the sublime object that he represents as subjectively purposive in the feeling it awakens about his mind's destination, his obedience to the moral law, or the absolute good. Kant writes:

> Only by supposing this Idea in ourselves, and in reference to it, are we capable of attaining to the Idea of the sublimity of that Being, which produces respect in us, not merely by the might that it displays in nature, but rather by means of the faculty which resides in us of judging it fearlessly and of regarding our destination as sublime in respect of it.[116]

Arendt most likely passes over the sublime, preferring the analytic of the beautiful as a basis for political judgment, because, to her, the idea of an absolute good and man's moral duty to respect it is politically dangerous. Kant's notion of the sublime is the kind of metaphysical absolute that Arendt sees at work in the political philosophy of Plato, in the soul's felicity of Christianity, in Kant's moral law, in Hegel's end of history and Absolute Spirit, and in Marx's socialized humanity. To base political judgment on the sublime would be to stave off the exchange of opinions based on what can be sensed, experienced, and communicated from relative spectator standpoints. It would replace these with a notion of absolute validity and final convergence, but one that is, at any given moment, unavailable to the experience of the many.

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[114] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §23 - §25, 101-10.
[115] Ibid., §29, 130.
[116] Ibid., §28, 129.

Fraser offers a valuable critique of Cascardi's reading. First, she notes that Arendt is rarely read as a proponent of normalization and that, contra Cascardi, democratic communication need not preclude radical change.[117] Further, while Cascardi argues that an ultimate agreement at the end of history is resistant to representation, this paradox is not a political resource, since while it is true that democrats should be concerned with who and what cannot be represented in a situated discursive regime, the idea that resists all representation has "an air of paradox suited better to religion than to politics."[118] Finally, whereas Cascardi argues that Arendt equates private sense to community sense, Fraser responds that there are, in fact, two kinds of community sense at work in Arendt:

> One is the tacit presumption of shared background norms and assumptions, including a shared language and a common world, a presumption that *could* turn out to be mistaken but that is nevertheless presupposed in making judgment claims; this "community sense" is pregiven and assumed. The other is the sort of achieved agreement, projected or real, that *could* result from the process of disputing judgment claims; this "community sense" is a possible outcome and achievement. There is no circularity, vicious or otherwise, in holding that judgment relies on the first meaning of community sense while simultaneously aiming to generate the second.[119]

The Guiding Principles of Action and Judgment

Having elucidated the structure of reflective judgments, the role of imagination, the notion of *sensus communis*, and the various understandings of what constitutes a community of judgment and what purposes it may serve, we return to questions initially raised in outlining the relationship between the acting genius and the impartial judge. We now question further, as Arendt did, what principles guide the judgment of meaningful acts, how these guiding principles work within reflective rather than determinant judgments, and to what extent these principles may also guide actors, both present and future.

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[117] Fraser, 168.
[118] Ibid., 169.
[119] Ibid., 170.

We may first wonder just how much of the meaning of an actor's deed the actor can know himself. Arendt has some contradictory answers to this question. On one hand, Arendt makes it clear that only the spectator can know the meaning of the whole of an actor's life and the larger story in which his individual acts fit. Even when the actor imagines his potential spectators and thus thinks more generally, his standpoint remains limited, partial. He still only acts with knowledge of the part of the whole that concerns him. It is the spectator's impartiality, his playing no part in the story, which gives him the privileged position from which to judge the meaning of the story. We recall that Heidegger's notion that the entire contextual situation of acting Dasein is disclosed by *phronesis* was an early source of Arendt's idea that performative actors disclose the world situation that contextualizes their acts through the performance itself. According to Heidegger's reading of Aristotle, the actor has a pre-conceptual intuition of his situation, one that only becomes transparent to him through the course of deliberation and action. We found that for Arendt, however, self-transparency is impossible once action enters into the realm of appearance. Action is thrown into the web of relationships, where it sets off new processes that the initial actor cannot control or appreciate impartially. Benhabib points out that Arendt provides an alternative to Kant's two-world distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal, where good moral intentions never find adequate embodiment in the web of human relationships.[120] Thus, the reflective judgment of the spectator is meant to redeem action, retrospectively bring meaning to these acts with a view of the whole cosmos of the act.

While Arendt clearly establishes that only the spectator can judge the meaning of the whole story that situates an act, we recall that for Arendt, it is the meaning of the act itself, apart from the larger story of causes and consequences, that is most important for disclosing meaning about the actor and the world in general. The deed is an end in itself without linkage to other deeds. After reading a passage from Arendt's lectures on Kant, we may ask if the actor can, in fact, see the meaning of his particular deed in his imagining of his prospective spectators. Might the actor see the meaning of his own deed, in itself? What is the relation of the meaning of a deed *in itself* to the maxim or principle that inspires it? Arendt writes:

> We were talking about the partiality of the actor, who, because he is involved, never sees the meaning of the whole. This is true for all stories; Hegel is entirely right that philosophy, like the owl of Minerva, spreads its wings only when the day is over, at dusk. The same is not true for the beautiful or for *any deed in itself.* The beautiful is, in Kantian terms, an end in itself, without reference to others – without linkage, as it were, to other beautiful things.[121]

We remember that as Arendt describes it, political judgment is not practical reason. This is an important aspect of the divide between the position of actor and spectator. According to Arendt, while the impartial, disinterested standpoint is the appropriate position from which to judge human affairs, it does not tell one how to act.[122] This is rather the job of practical reason, which is identical with the rational will that utters commands and speaks in imperatives.[123] Following the example of the French Revolution, while its spectators carried its ultimate meaning and saw its greatness, they produced no maxims of action.[124] By Arendt's reading, Kant's question "What ought I do?" only deals with the conduct of the self in isolation and is geared toward the self-interested attainment of a kind of inner felicity, rather than how the political world ought to look.[125] Kant derives the standard of publicity that combines political action with right, from the criterion of self-consistency in his moral philosophy. For Kant, action must be morally valid, its maxim consistent with publicity in that it must be just, so that it would not excite opposition if publicized.[126] Arendt calls on Machiavelli to explain the different standard at work in political judgment and its care for the world: "Though it is true that, by resisting evil, you are likely to be involved in evil, your care for the world takes precedence in politics over your care for your self – whether this self is your body or your soul."[127]

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[120] Benhabib, 188.

[121] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 77. My emphasis.

Bernstein criticizes Arendt for calling judgment the political ability *par excellence*, but then engaging it to tell right from wrong, a form of moral judgment, which elsewhere Arendt finds to be suprapolitical.[128] But what Arendt finds suprapolitical is the adoption of moral principles as binding truths, universals under which particular cases only need be subsumed. Arendt turns to the aesthetic model because the judgment of political action, the judgment of the meaning of acts whose ends and moral motives may be frustrated in the phenomenal realm or "web of human relationships," is a matter of opinion dealing with particulars, where judging right versus wrong is not a matter of verifying results or the formal universalizability of maxims. Arendt holds that redeeming the dignity of an act and the *who* of the actor is not merely a matter of judging one's act as being morally motivated.

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[122] Ibid., 44.
[123] Ibid., 15.
[124] Ibid., 52.
[125] Ibid., 19-20.
[126] Ibid., 48-49.
[127] Ibid., 50.
[128] Bernstein, 233.

There is, however, a contradiction between moral universality (the imperative of action's publicity) and the standards of the enthusiastic spectator. This again arises in Kant's judgment of the actors of the French Revolution. The spectator often feels disinterestedly enthusiastic about acts whose maxims, if publicized in advance, would defeat the cause of the act, would excite opposition, and would therefore be non-universal. Practical reason would not allow for the French Revolution, but demand rather that peaceful means be pursued to progress toward a cosmopolitan whole. Arendt not only argues that the spectator of the French Revolution would not agree that peace would be the answer, but also, along with Kant, that the spectator would see the sublime side of war, man's courage in the face of danger.[129] Arendt writes:

> What you see here clearly is the clash between the principle according to which you should act and the principle according to which you should judge. For Kant condemns the very action whose results he then affirms with a satisfaction bordering on enthusiasm.[130]

And further:

> Had [Kant] acted on the knowledge he had gained as a spectator, he would, in his own mind, have been a criminal. Had he forgotten, because of this "moral

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[129] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 52-53.
[130] Ibid., 48.

> duty," his insights as a spectator, he would have become what so many good men, involved and engaged in public affairs, tend to be – an idealistic fool.[131]

As Beiner argues, for Arendt, political judgment is a matter of judging appearances, not purposes and intentions.[132] Arendt suggests that in politics, as opposed to moral theory, everything depends on public, rather than private conduct. Judgment of this conduct, as opposed to practical reason, arises from "a merely contemplative pleasure or inactive delight."[133] Arendt's insistence on performative virtuosity in disclosive action means that the spectator must judge the actor for how he actually acts within his situation, not only what principles or morals supposedly motivated him, but also what change to the web of human relationships was actually effected in his act. This becomes part of the narrative the spectator tells. Since to judge aesthetically is to judge according to how one wants the world *to look*, to judge an actor is to judge what he brings to the world – it is to judge, retrospectively, the inspiring principle and the act inseparably, as they appear, rather than according to the moral force of the principle regardless of the act's effects. We may wonder how to reconcile this with Arendt's thesis that an act's meaning is separate from questions of its success or failure. We might suggest that Arendt's spectator judges according to the actor's virtuosity given the conditions of action, as well as what he discloses about himself and mankind in general, separate from considerations of whether a universal history would judge it as a success or failure.

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[131] Ibid., 54.
[132] Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging," 141.
[133] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 15.

Arendt is not suggesting that the position of actor and spectator be forever separated, or that those who act have no access to judge the political implications of their action. To make this hard separation would be to construe the political and philosophical ways of life as mutually exclusive, as in Plato's political philosophy: "one gets an absolute distinction between the one who *knows* what is best to do [*archein*] and the other who, following his guidance or his commands, will carry it through [*prattein*]."[134]

By Arendt's reading, Kant posits the idea of an original compact of mankind that, if man is to be called humane, should regulate not only the spectator's judgments, but also act as the inspiring principle for actors. When the original compact of mankind becomes the principle for both actor and spectator, actor and spectator become one: "When one judges and when one acts in political matters, one is supposed to take one's bearings from the idea, not the actuality, of being a world citizen and, therefore, also a *Weltbetrachter*, a world spectator."[135] While she never develops its relationship, Arendt associates the notion of the original compact of mankind with Kant's idea of *purposiveness*.[136] According to Kant, judging aesthetically implies judging according to a specific notion of purposiveness that is different from an identification of the *good*. In the pure aesthetical judgment, one cannot take purposes of objects into account, for these would be teleological judgments. Kant writes that one understands something as good only if one understands its concept and thereby its purpose, what it is supposed to be in its perfection. We need no objective purpose or concept to find something beautiful.[137] There is, however, a *formal subjective purposiveness* felt when one finds something beautiful.[138] The beautiful object is called purposive when its representation is combined with the feeling of pleasure.[139] According to Kant, we judge the object by the purposiveness of its representation in respect of the furtherance of the free play of the cognitive faculties.[140] Arendt writes that the only objects that seem purposeless are objects of beauty and human beings. But just as what is beautiful has the special purpose of pleasing men, we can infer that the acts of men can please and, just like beautiful objects, make men feel at home in the world:

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[134] Ibid., 60.
[135] Ibid., 75-76.
[136] Ibid., 76.

> Is it by virtue of this idea of mankind, present in every single man, that men are human, and they can be called civilized or humane to the extent that this idea becomes the principle not only of their judgments but of their actions. It is at this point that actor and spectator become united; the maxim of the actor and the maxim, the "standard," according to which the spectator judges the spectacle of the world, become one.[141]

But here it is as though Arendt sees the positing of this original compact – a regulatory or inspiring principle of both action and judgment – as a kind of return to the imperative of universality, albeit through communicability, that determines action in advance, like moral behavior at the level of the willing individual. She writes: "The, as it were, categorical imperative for action could read as follows: Always act on the maxim through which this original compact can be actualized into a general law."[142]

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[137] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §4, 50.
[138] Ibid., §10, 67-68.
[139] Ibid., §VII, 30.
[140] Ibid., §35, 161-62.
[141] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 75.
[142] Ibid.

If an actor acts according to how he wishes to appear, according to the potential judgment of his internalized spectator, according to the demands of communicability, and according to the possibility of the realization of an original human compact, does this self-limitation mean that his act is no longer *sui generis*, no longer free and spontaneous? Is there a tension between Arendt's proposition that free acts should be judged without the help of universals, on one hand, and her notion that acts are inspired from without by principles, which are universal concepts, on the other? What kind of universals, then, maintain the *originality* of the deed and the disclosed *who* of the actor? Arendt never explicitly states in these lectures whether acting according to the principle of this original compact would be to limit the freedom of the act by self-imposing a determining maxim of universality. By Arendt's account in *The Human Condition* and "What is Freedom?" we may assume that the freedom of an act inspired by the principle of an original human compact would consist in its virtuous performance (*I-can*), rather than in the universality of the principle. One is free to act by principles or maxims that are not morally universal, after all. This is one of the potential dangers of freedom. He who acts according to this compact may hope that future judges will see him as an example of the principle, but this judgment of meaning is always revisable, never left to one actor.

As we have seen, the observers of political phenomenon face the challenge of judging the significance or virtuosity displayed in particular acts, but without the solidity of universal measures under which to subsume the phenomena. The uniqueness of the act is lost if the spectator merely relates it to a universal measure, as in a determinate judgment. Arendt asserts that deeds are to be judged according to their greatness, their virtuosity, their beauty, their potential imperishability, their unprecedented breaking of norms and routines, and for what they disclose of the actor and his world. This is different from the judging of moral conduct, whether one judges by a strictly formal and universal imperative or whether one takes the context of the actor's situation and life narrative into consideration. Nor can the spectator judge the particular according to just any other particular. The judgment requires a *tertium quid* or *tertium comparationis*. Arendt found the main difficulty of reflective judgment to be the linking of the particular with the general that the spectator must identify. To help regulate one's reflections within judgment, Arendt turned not only to Kant's notion of *the original compact of mankind,* with its related notion of *purposiveness*, but also to Kant's notion of *exemplary validity*, a notion Arendt found "far more valuable."[143]

Arendt refers to *exemplary validity* not only in her lectures on Kant, but also in "Truth and Politics." Its notion implies that particular deeds may be taken as valid examples by which to judge other cases. This establishes an historical tradition that provides the origin for concepts and deeds that are their heirs.[144] This notion is crystallized in the word *principium*, which is both a beginning (premiere) and an ideal (principle). The community of spectators re-articulates, through continuous argument, the *sensus communis* from which the meaning or intelligibility of these principles and their historical examples arise and in which they are conserved. . In the third *Critique* Kant writes:

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[143] Ibid., 76.
[144] Ibid., 85.

> But of all faculties and talents Taste, because its judgment is not determinable by concepts and precepts, is just that one which most needs examples of what has in the progress of culture received the longest approval; that it may not become again uncivilized and return to the crudeness of its first essays.[145]

What may serve as grounds for comparison in the facilitation of judgment are not abstract concepts, universals as in the case of determinant judgments, but valid examples from the past, remembered deeds, the narratively reified acts of genius, that embody similar principles within them. Arendt emphasizes that the example remains a particular that reveals the generality that otherwise could not be defined. According to one of Arendt's favorite examples, when Socrates refused to escape the death sentence, he set an example of the ethical principle that it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong. Or, from the lectures on Kant: "Courage is *like* Achilles."[146] The examples of ethical principles discovered from history and poetry provide the imagination with the intuitions needed to verify the pure concepts of understanding.[147]

It is up to the spectator to judge what principle is disclosed in the actor's deed. This communicable universal is generated from the particular phenomenon witnessed by the spectator. While imagination provides conceptual schemata for cognition, it also provides examples for judgment that enable a synthesis between intuited particularity and the intellected universal principle. Imagination allows for the synthesis of particular and general in the reflective judgment, by providing for understanding an image or schema, so that the particular object judged can be seen to share properties with similar objects. These examples can be understood by many spectators, thus making judgments communicable. A judgment has exemplary validity when it compares the present deed or actor with an example of the same principle, made present out of the past by the imagination, to the extent that the chosen example is appropriate. Choosing a suitable example is like a matter of taste, not purely subjective, but a choice that calls for assent. The validity of the example is further limited to those spectators who can verify its adequacy, either those who directly witnessed the particular actor that served as the example, or those who were heirs to the historical tradition begun when that actor became associated with his inspiring principle.[148]

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[145] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §32, 156-57.
[146] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 77.
[147] Arendt, "Truth and Politics," 248.

Arendt sees the setting of examples as a way in which ethical principles may become practical and inspire action. She also sees it as a way in which ethical principles may be verified and validated in a way that preserves the integrity of the political realm, in that validation may be obtained through the freeman's consent to the principle, won by persuasion, as though the principle were a matter of opinion, rather than through his coerced obedience, as though the principle were a matter of undisputable rational or logical truth.[149]

The Spectator Disclosed, Augmented Interpretations, and *Humanitas*

In judging and in choosing valid examples, the spectator is no longer passive, but emerges as a sort of actor himself, in that he changes the world by bringing a new interpretation to the web of human relationships that can be further augmented by new acts and new interpretations. For example, Feher writes that as a spectator of the revolutions, Arendt passed judgment on past actors with the intent of influencing future actors.[150] The very novelty of action means that no judgment gets the final word on its meaning. The initial interpretation can be augmented or revised by another. Bilsky writes that the narrative mode of judgment enables the reader (a later judge or spectator) to reenact the process of enlarged mentality and to remain critical of the initial judgment.[151] Narrators set the process of interpreting the past in motion so that it is never mastered.

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[148] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 81-85.
[149] Arendt, "Truth and Politics," 247-48.

Further augmentation of initial spectator judgments may be facilitated by the very structure of aesthetical ideas, as Kant describes them. Kant writes that an aesthetical idea is a representation of the imagination associated with a concept to make it available to sense, but which is bound up with other partial representations. To this concept, then, is added other ineffable thought to which there is no adequate concept, so that it cannot be encompassed entirely by language. While imagination submits to the understanding that "clips its wings," it can also provide the understanding with an overabundance of representations that cannot be understood, but which excite the cognitive faculties. The concept becomes aesthetically enlarged, or unbounded.[152] The overabundance of ineffable thought associated to the aesthetical idea is then available to future interpretation, future enlargement. In Heideggerian terms, an excess of Being is disclosed. We may note, however, that this disclosure of Being requires the symbolic, or representative order of the spectator's interpretation, not only noetic vision pertaining to the wordless, intuitive order. Kant's aesthetical ideas bear a strong similarity in this regard to the signs of the Oracles, passed on by one's *daimon*, which, according to Kristeva, were "condensed, incomplete, and atomized" in a way that gives rise to the "infinite action of interpretation."[153]

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[150] Feher, 7.

[151] Bilsky, 272.

[152] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §49, 197-202.

By judging, the spectator not only completes the disclosure of *who* the actor is; he also discloses *who* he is, as well as features of the world. The *who* of the judging spectator so disclosed is only valid in its general communicability. Arendt writes: "By this manner of judging, the person discloses to an extent also himself, what kind of person he is, and this disclosure, which is involuntary, gains in validity to the degree that it has liberated itself from merely individual idiosyncrasies."[154] Villa notes that the spectator also becomes decentered by his own disinterestedness in the process of disclosing meaning.[155]

While the valid judge must enlarge his thought above idiosyncrasy, he must never lose the personal element that remains according to the initial standpoint from which he senses the phenomenon. The spectator's judgment must never lose its personal quality by being heteronomously displaced by the actual opinions of others. The disclosure of the *who* of the spectator is intimately connected to Arendt's notions of the *valid personality* and *humanitas*. Arendt calls *humanitas* the humanizing of the beautiful, through personal taste, to create a culture: "Taste debarbarizes the world of the beautiful by not being overwhelmed by it; it takes care of the beautiful in its own "personal" way."[156] *Humanitas* also implies freely and wisely choosing one's company among men, things, and thoughts, to judge freely, and not be coerced by the absolutes of truth and beauty often at work in specialized realms of knowledge.[157] Thus, the exertion of reflective judgment cultivates a publicly revealed *who* whose performance of thought is not categorically determined by absolutely binding objective truths, but rather reveals a unique verdict that combines sensitivity to phenomenal events with thought that is valid insofar as it visits the standpoints of others. As we saw in chapters one and two, the public performance of one's thought is an idea that Arendt develops along with the notion of boundary situations, adopted from her teacher, Jaspers. The two-in-one of thinking, by its power of negation, frees judgment by breaking down ossified norms and epistemic assumptions. It is judging that makes thinking manifest in the world of appearances. In her lectures on Kant, Arendt holds that the public appearance of thought, through judgment, is essential for thought's very survival: "unless you can somehow communicate and expose to the test of others, either orally or in writing, whatever you may have found out when you were alone, this faculty [of thinking] exerted in solitude will disappear."[158]

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[153] Kristeva, 74.
[154] Arendt, "Crisis in Culture," 223.
[155] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 107.

In her *laudatio* to Jaspers, Arendt connects the disclosed *daimon* and the spiritual dimension of the public realm to one's public judgment as a valid personality. This personality performs within Jaspers' three leaps of boundary situations, applying the reflection of the universal standpoint to the political phenomenon that matters to a community of situated spectators. Jaspers' type of thought, which "succeeds in changing, widening, sharpening – or, as he himself would beautifully put it, in illuminating," is the political mentality that confirms the Kantian enlarged mentality.[159]

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[156] Arendt, "Crisis in Culture," 224.

[157] Ibid., 225-26.

[158] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 40.

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[159] Ibid., 79.

Chapter Five:

Forgotten Fragments: Arendt's Critique of Philosophies of History

In this final chapter we examine Arendt's critique of teleological philosophies of history. We also question the implications of Arendt's own alternative method of fragmentary historiography, as influenced by Walter Benjamin. Arendt arrives at a special understanding of time itself, one she explains through images adopted from Franz Kafka, and one that describes the actor and spectator's positions in a gap between past and future. As Kristeva has said, for Arendt, the only possible counter to the modern forces that threaten freedom is to change our relationship to time.[1] We guide our analysis of Arendt's notion of history and time once more with an eye to the phenomenon of disclosure of the *who* and of the *world*. How does one particular understanding of history and method of historiography facilitate or stultify the narrative disclosure of deeds? Can the *who* be meaningfully disclosed through a spectator narrative divorced from a teleological notion of history?

In order to understand the purpose of Arendt's fragmentary approach to history, we first set out the context in which she develops it. Arendt offers her account of fragmentary historiography most vividly in the articles of *Between Past and Future* and in her reading of Benjamin in *Men in Dark Times*. Her account is a critical response to what Arendt sees as the dangers of modern philosophies of history, as presented by Kant, Hegel, and Marx, and especially of those elements in these philosophies that Arendt sees as contributing to the appearance of totalitarian logic. To set the stage for an exploration of Arendt's own method of historiography and her relation to Benjamin and Kafka, we first outline Arendt's critical readings of progressive history in Kant, Hegel, and Marx, especially as they relate to totalitarian logic. For Arendt, it was the disastrous results of totalitarian rule that showed, once and for all, that the negative moment within dialectical historicism could not be subsumed, concealed, and augmented within a narrative worthy of the dignity of individuals or of mankind.

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[1] Kristeva, 164.

We begin by returning briefly to Kant's theory of judgment, as it is through the spectator's judgment of deeds that an enlarged mentality may develop, within the singular subject and among mankind in general. This development assumes an underlying progression of mankind's freedom throughout history, one that can be seen from the spectator's view to the whole. This view abstracts from particular conflicting deeds and intentions, as well as from instances of war, violence, and inhumane acts that otherwise might be a sign of man's retrogression or eternal repetition. According to Arendt, Kant's notion of the *ruse of nature* is the precursor to Hegel's *cunning of reason* and Marx's notion of class interest, which, as meta-agents, ostensibly propel mankind progressively toward the end of history with irresistible force.

Kantian Enlarged Mentality and the *Ruse of Nature*

It is the exchange of judgments between spectators of variously situated perspectives, the bearers of the meanings of acts, that holds the promise of what Kant, a spectator of the French Revolution, called a cosmopolitan, enlarged mentality over time. For Kant, it is not the particular event that is meaningful, but the spectator's judgment, which manifests his disinterested sympathy and which appears publicly. According to Arendt, the Kantian spectator decides if progress is being made by the particular event he witnesses. His public sympathy shows the moral predisposition of humanity and gives reason for hope in progress. The public appearance of sympathy is itself part of the progress of mankind toward a cosmopolitan existence in which all original human capacities may be developed. Even if the efforts of the actors ultimately fail, their meaning loses no force, since the event is too interwoven in the general interest of humanity to be forgotten, and its influence may be propagated widely enough that it may be repeated by other people who, in their way, participate in the event. This reveals "the prospect of an immeasurable time."[2] Kant sees the human race progressing according to *nature's secret ruse*, toward a cultured sociability, toward a heightened freedom and peace between nations. Arendt writes that for the Kantian spectator, the only alternatives to an assumption of progress were "either regress, which would produce despair, or eternal sameness, which would bore us to death."[3] Without assuming the possibility of progress, which Kant admits may be interrupted periodically, men of action would lack the inborn duty, dictated by reason, of influencing posterity for the common good.

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[2] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 46.
[3] Ibid., 51.

Ricoeur suggests an alternative interpretation of Kantian reflective judgment to that of Arendt, one more closely connected to natural finality, or historical teleology, through the concept of humanity's natural *disposition* to a cosmopolitan world order. The concept of humanity's disposition to strive toward a cosmopolitan state, a disposition that nature endows humans with, joins teleology and cosmopolitanism. Ricoeur sees an "excessive disjunction" between the "prospective orientation of the teleological judgment" in Kant and the "retrospective judgment of the spectator on the aesthetic and political plane."[4] Critical reflection upon past events bears also a prospective, prophetic, and teleological dimension: "Otherwise, how will past events be able to appear as filled with promises, hence filled with the future?"[5] Ricoeur writes that reflective judgment is already at work in the move from empirical signs of human progress toward the ideal of a perfect, cosmopolitan, civil constitution. This idea is only nourished by the same "signs, symptoms, and indications"[6] with which Arendt's political judgment is concerned. Exemplarity thus consists in providing proof for political and historical hope, a "point of futurity to communicability."[7]

As Cascardi explains in a similar light, Kant staked his conviction in progress on man's aesthetic ability to judge the meaning of historical signs and symbols of progress, to see fragments of history as representing the progressive shape of history as a whole. Kant's spectator of exemplary signs is a solution to the problematic separation of theory and practice. It allows a movement from historically embedded events, partial representations of the universality of moral ends, to the unrepresentable kingdom of ends beyond the historical world, a space of noumenal freedom. As a sign, the French Revolution transcends mere phenomenon; it is "a fragment in which we perceive the whole, it is the solution to the problem of the unpresentability of the end-state of progress."[8] This end state, according to Cascardi, is a radical form of agreement among men in questions of morality and of taste.

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[4] Ricoeur, "Aesthetic Judgment and Political Judgment," 106.
[5] Ibid., 108.
[6] Ibid., 102.
[7] Ibid., 108.

We can see signs of Kant's notion of an eventual convergence of taste and morality if we return to the *Critique of Judgment*. Kant holds that beauty is the symbol of the morally good and that the exercise of taste makes man susceptible to moral feeling. It is only in this respect that it gives pleasure with a claim for the agreement of everyone else. Taste shows imagination, free of the charms of sense, as capable of purposive determination of the understanding.[9] Taste is a faculty for judging the sensible representation of moral ideas, through analogy. He concludes that only in bringing sensibility in line with moral feeling can genuine taste become invariable.[10] Thus, despite his own initial separation of aesthetic judgments from a respect for the moral good, Kant connects the two through the notion of beauty as a symbol of the morally good. Arendt does not comment much on Kant's connection, except to say that for Kant, the beautiful teaches humans to love without self-interest.[11] But Arendt remains skeptical of the possibility and critical of the desirability of a final convergence of opinion around moral absolutes, as this would determine action in advance and do violence to the plurality of spectator perspectives.

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[8] Cascardi, 106.
[9] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §59, 251-52.
[10] Ibid., §60, 255.

According to Arendt's reading of Kant, nature's providence produces harmony among men in the long run, even against their will and through their discord. Even war motivates eventual peace through exhaustion and the avoidance of the suffering it causes, while motivating the development of human talents.[12] But, as Arendt notes, this long-run progress is of little consolation for the individual who suffers particular evils and does not survive to enjoy the future, improved, state of affairs. For Kant, progress remains a melancholy notion for the individual, for his condition always remains an evil in comparison with the better condition that might come.[13]

In addition, and contrary to Cascardi's reading, Arendt suggests that for Kant, there is no end state that history arrives at, but rather, progress is perpetual. Arendt concludes that this notion of perpetual progress implies that the value of man can only be revealed in the whole perpetual process of the development of the capacities of the human species, but "never to any man or generation of men."[14] No actor can disclose *who* he is, nor the meaning of the cosmos of his deed in its relation to the world; this disclosure is rather perpetually differed to a later moment to which mankind progresses, but to which he never arrives. Arendt writes:

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[11] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 73.
[12] Ibid., 52-54.
[13] Ibid., 8-9.
[14] Ibid., 58.

> In Kant himself there is this contradiction: Infinite Progress is the law of the human species; at the same time, man's dignity demands that he be seen…in his particularity and, as such, be seen – but without any comparison and independent of time – as reflecting mankind in general. In other words, the very idea of progress – if it is more than a change in circumstances and an improvement of the world – contradicts Kant's notion of man's dignity. It is against human dignity to believe in progress. Progress, moreover, means that the story never has an end. The end of the story itself is infinity. There is no point at which we might stand still and look back with the backward glance of the historian.[15]

Hegel's Philosophy of History

The French Revolution was a decisive event not only for Kant's theory of spectatorship and the development of an enlarged mentality, but also for Hegel's philosophy of universal history. Arendt relates that the French Revolution was the first time that men built reality according to the rational projection of how reality ought to be, a reconciliation between the realm of thought and the political realm.[16] In a 1966 seminar on Marx, Arendt explains the role of Hegel's interpretation of the French Revolution for subsequent historicism and understandings of modern revolution in general: "Decisive not simply that this was such a great event but that this event in the eyes of the philosophers contained Meaning. […] That truth – eternal, in a transcendent realm – has come down from the skies, incarnated in men."[17] Thus arises Hegel's modern concept of history, where the philosopher's absolute, accessible to contemplative thought, is revealed in human action through history. The French Revolution was fundamental to Hegel's account of universal history as a progressive reconciliation, an embodiment of Spirit in secular life that endows human affairs with meaning.[18] In a 1954 lecture on action and thought after the French Revolution, Arendt states that for Hegel, "truth is not man-made truth…the Absolute only needs and uses mankind and its history for its revelation."[19] In a 1969 lecture, Arendt relates Hegel's notion of Spirit's incarnation in history:

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[15] Ibid., 77.
[16] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 45.
[17] Arendt, "Marx, Karl," image 1.

> Behind this whole philosophy, the philosophy of History, we find the notion of Incarnation. Logos becomes flesh in the "world historical individuals". Without men and these individuals, the Spirit and God himself would remain abstract, without reality, a mere idea. In Hegel God is not anthropomorphic but men are theomorphic – they can contain the divine by acting it out. "The Absolute wills to be with us." Logos becomes flesh, but not in each of the world historical individuals but in the process as a whole.[20]

In modernity, progress becomes the project of mankind and the irresistible force acting behind their backs, a personified force we see in Kant's ruse of nature, Hegel's cunning of reason, and Marx's dialectical materialism. Human activities become the activities of personified concepts. What Arendt deems the riddle of history, however, is that man never achieves his intended goal, that any meaning of history arises in retrospect, out of the spectator's story, after much error, violence, and cross-purposive action.[21]

In the lecture cited above, Arendt explains dialectics as a way to think about things that are in constant change. Thinking dialectically allows the mind to follow a movement of the progressive development of truth. Thinking in this way, every moment negates, subsumes, and augments the previous one.

> [E]verything that is in this realm of human affairs changes into non being. That was the reason why men tried to escape from it into a beyond where everything

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[18] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 45.

[19] Arendt, "Action and Thought after the French Revolution," image 17.

[20] Arendt, "What is Political Philosophy?" image 49.

[21] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 153-54.

> would be at rest. The point however is to remain where we are and fashion our thinking in such a way that it can comprehend this reality.[22]

Arendt relates this manner of thinking to the spectatorship of the French Revolution, an event that negated the established institutions and called forth a counter-revolution. The French Revolution was decisive for the retrospective connection of freedom to necessity from the standpoint of the spectator, the standpoint that Hegel privileged in his theory of the irresistibility of the progression of freedom and reason in history. In *On Revolution*, Arendt writes that the French Revolution introduced its own vocabulary of irresistibility – represented in images of storms, waves, and torrents – and conceptualized by spectators as historical necessity. The actors were not judged by spectators as being the authors of their own deeds, but rather their sufferers. It appeared after the restoration of the Bourbons that despite their efforts for free agency, the revolutionaries were subject to the force of historical necessity.[23]

The fallacy of the philosophy of history, as Arendt calls it, derives from the fact that it describes action not from the standpoint of the actor, but from the standpoint of the spectator, for whom events seem to follow necessarily. Villa writes that Arendt sees the fallacy that the progress toward freedom is a necessary one as stemming from the reification of the contemplative standpoint.[24] Arendt deems the spectator's view of events as *necessary* to be an existential illusion.[25] In the 1969 lectures she adds: "Only at [the] end does the haphazard sequence of events become a whole and as this whole shows what it is all about. The meaning then appears in the conscious mind that has it assimilated into its very own and can look at it from within."[26]

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[22] Arendt, "What is Political Philosophy?" image 48.
[23] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 48-51.
[24] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 67.
[25] Arendt, "Truth and Politics," 243.

The Hegelian notion of historical necessity and the French Revolution's vocabulary of irresistibility shaped nineteenth and twentieth century revolutions. Necessity, rather than freedom, becomes the main category of revolutionary and political thought, so that future actors consider themselves as agents of historical necessity and act as if they already see from the spectator's seat. According to Arendt, the revolutionaries failed to reflect upon the accumulated wisdom of proper forms of government, but instead replayed performances of the past. They learned history, but not action. The dialectical movements between revolution and counterrevolution subsumed any event that tried to establish freedom, so that freedom and necessity were seen to eventually coincide. Arendt deems this paradox the least bearable of all of modern thought. As an example, Arendt cites the Bolsheviks' re-engagement of ideology and terror, the creation and demonizing of objective counter-revolutionary suspects, to fulfill the demands of dialectical historical necessity.[27] Arendt attributes the violence of the Bolshevik Revolution to a sense of acting out necessary historical forces and thus showing more concern with re-enacting the play of past revolutions than beginning or founding something unprecedented:

> What the men of the Russian Revolution had learned from the French Revolution…was history and not action. They had acquired the skill to play whatever part the great drama of history was going to assign them, and if no other role was available but that of villain, they were more than willing to accept

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[26] Arendt, "What is Political Philosophy?" image 49.
[27] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 52-57, 100.

> their part rather than remain outside the play. [...] [T]hey were fooled by history, and they have become the fools of history.[28]

In "Willing," from *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt suggests that the Christian question of how to reconcile free will with faith in God survives in modernity as the question of how to reconcile free will, as the spring of action and spontaneous beginning, with the necessary laws of history and world spirit.[29] Hegel saw reason directing contingent wills without their knowledge, in a way visible only retrospectively to the philosopher-spectator at the end of history, in a way that purifies the reality of the deed of anything accidental.[30] Hegel presupposes one world-mind ruling over the plurality of empirical wills, to direct them toward a meaning arising out of reason's need for a world that is as it ought to be. The embodiment or incarnation of World Spirit requires the free willing of men; however, Arendt is unsatisfied with Hegel's attempt to reconcile the will's projection onto the future with thought's enduring present through the insight that the actual world is rational. To Arendt, Hegel's reconciliation of will and thought comes at the expense of both "the thinking ego's experience of an enduring present and the willing ego's insistence on the primacy of the future."[31]

Arendt writes that Hegel's progressive notion of history places new emphasis on the will as an organ of the future. Her reading of the Hegelian understandings of contemplative thought and the will relies on Alexandre Koyré's translation and commentary, one that was also the basis of Alexandre Kojève's interpretation. Arendt writes that in both Hegel and Marx, the moment of negation that drives history is derived from the will's negation of both the past and the present. In Hegel's time speculations, the willing ego turns its attention to the future, which negates the present as an anticipated *no-more*. Being will be accomplished in the future, while that which is already accomplished belongs to the past. While thinking relates to this past with a certain equanimity, as memory that cannot be changed, willing is disquiet and ambitious in relation to the future, since change is within its power. Man continually denies the present and *creates* his own future through the faculty of will, so that the essence of the present is *not-to-be*. The present, therefore, contains the future as its own negation. Arendt finds the will's negation of the present, combined with the notion of infinite progress, to be an annihilating force. The willing ego restlessly transforms the future into a present and only ceases to exert itself when all is accomplished. The thinking ego asserts itself when the future disappears, along with ambition, and when Becoming ends in Being. Hegel's true fulfillment of time, according to Arendt, is the eternal *nunc stans*, when mind switches from willing to thinking.[32]

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[28] Ibid., 58.
[29] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 3.
[30] Ibid., 28.
[31] Ibid., 49.

In 1969, Arendt's "last word" of her New School lecture on Hegel, a lecture that concluded a larger course on political philosophy, was a definition of thinking as "reconciliation with whatever is."[33] In the preface to *Between Past and Future*, Arendt defines the task of the mind as reaching an understanding of what has happened and adds that for Hegel, the task of the mind is to reconcile the self with reality, "to be at peace with the world."[34] Hegel's speculative philosophy is, above all, a project of reconciliation. His ambitious aim is to reconcile the human subject with a world that immediately appears alien to him. His philosophy of history attempts to reconcile the phenomenal results of a plurality of acts propelled by empirical wills, with thought's demand for a rational world. The remembering ego internalizes, or appropriates the appearances of the past that are meaningful for the present. For Hegel, philosophy is the understanding of what exists, while what exists is reason. The past becomes part of mind, so that mind and world are reconciled.[35] In the 1969 lectures, Arendt expounds on the relation between mind's search for reconciliation with the past and another fundamental Hegelian notion:

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[32] Ibid., 36-50.

[33] Arendt, "What is Political Philosophy?" image 49.

[34] Arendt, "Preface," in *Between Past and Future*, 8.

> Philosophy is the process of appropriation, and reconciliation is the moment when what seemed to be outside becomes property of the Self. Once the self has assimilated in thought the whole process of History, it comes to the insight: What is actual is reasonable, what is reasonable is actual. More than that: Freedom understood as a development of the idea becomes actual by necessity. If actual processes are reasonable then, obviously, they are necessary for reason recognizes only what cannot be otherwise than it is.[36]

In a lecture three years earlier, Arendt offers two options in reading Hegel's famous words from the preface of the *Philosophy of Right*: "What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational."[37] She suggests that it either means that only what is real is reasonable, a possibility she deems conservative, or that only what is reasonable is real, an interpretation that could mobilize revolution. Either way, everything that is not reasonable is seen as "accidental or irrelevant."[38] In "Willing," Arendt notes that appearances that cannot be assimilated to mind are thus treated as irrelevant accident, with no consequence for a Hegelian view of history.[39] According to Villa, in Hegel's brand of critical remembrance the past is a source of meaning to appropriate through a story of development in which negativity is re-inscribed in the present logos.[40] However, these moments of negativity are not remembered on their own terms, for what they disclosed about the world in their own time, or for *who* they disclose among past actors. Moments in history that are not viewed from the present standpoint of the spectator as having been the world historical embodiment of Spirit, their era's carrier of the torch of concrete rational autonomy, are concealed. Arendt uses the imagery of sterility to illustrate her point in the 1969 lectures:

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[35] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 40.
[36] Arendt, "What is Political Philosophy?" image 48.
[37] Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 10.
[38] Arendt, "Marx, Karl," image 1.

> What is not reasonable is not really – it is not remembered, it is futile, it has no permanence – namely the permanence that prevails in aufheben: it is sterile, very much like a couple without children. The world-spirit travels from country to country, and the "garbage can" of history in Marxism is only a rather down-to-earth expression of what follows from Hegel. Greece in the first century BC is in the garbage can. The process itself constantly eliminates what it no longer needs.[41]

Positing the rational as the real in the interest of mind's reconciliation with the phenomenal can also have a devastating effect on mankind's ability to recognize the truth of events that appear as irrational or haphazard. In "Truth and Politics," Arendt suggests that events can always have been otherwise, that they can be irrational, and that this is the price of freedom. They can, nonetheless, disclose aspects of the shared social and political world, and should be judged according to the phenomenal specificity of the event, as Arendt's incorporation of Kantian aesthetic judgment suggests. Arendt reminds us that mankind's common reality is at stake in such judgment. Factual truths revealed by events and established by speaking witnesses are fragile, always challenged by power.[42] However, modern philosophies of history have tried to make peace with facticity by positing the necessity of dialectical World Spirit or material conditions. This cleanses the arbitrary and irrational from the political realm.[43]

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[39] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 40.
[40] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 10.
[41] Arendt, "What is Political Philosophy?" image 49.

In "The Concept of History: Ancient and Modern," Arendt writes that all modern historical consciousness is characterized by Hegel's thesis that truth reveals itself in the temporal process.[44] The Hegelian time concept and notion of historical progression might appear spatially as a series of spirals, each returning on itself, but constantly moving forward and upward. Hegel thus combines two time concepts – one cyclical and one rectilinear. There is a movement that presupposes a beginning reached only at its end. Each generation begins again, but at a higher level, since remembrance conserves earlier experience.[45] In *On Revolution*, Arendt suggests that necessity in history survives the modern break with cyclical time concepts and eternal recurrence, and reappears in a rectilinear time concept as a spiral that stretches into an unknown future.[46] However, where Arendt reads Kant as suggesting the possibility of infinite progress, she reads Hegel as positing the possibility of an end of history. This is most clear in her lectures on Kant. In these she argues that for Hegel, the revelation of Absolute Spirit must come to an end, that the process of history is not infinite, but that this end point requires many generations and centuries to come about.[47]

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[42] Arendt, "Truth and Politics," 231, 237-38.
[43] Ibid., 242-43.
[44] Arendt, "The Concept of History: Ancient and Modern," in *Between Past and Future*, 68.
[45] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 47.
[46] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 55.
[47] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 57.

Arendt asks if there is an end to history, "What, if anything, is going to happen after its end has come about?"[48] A related critique that she offers is that Hegel's dialectical historical process does not adequately recognize the possibility of new and unprecedented events and deeds that signify radical historical disjunctions. Hegel's system can only claim objective truth if history were at a factual end, if nothing new could come about. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt argues that the unprecedented appearance of the camps, a manifestation of "radical evil," put an end to the dialectical historical notion of a mere transformation of qualities.[49]

Another of Arendt's primary reservations with this notion of history is that at the supposed end of history, not man, but Absolute Spirit is finally disclosed, and the greatness of singular men is only realized insofar as he is finally able to understand the whole.[50] This understanding is meant to reconcile man to the whole movement of Spirit, which, for Hegel, is how man attains immortality. The modern search for secular immortality is the content of modern history. Man is immortal insofar as he belongs to the history of World Spirit. In this way, he can be immortal just by understanding history's progression, and by contemplatively appropriating the previous moments of Spirit's advancement through *bildung*. Here, immortalization is not a matter of being a member of a particular political community, or by being a commemorated actor of unique deeds.[51]

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 443.
[50] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 57.
[51] Arendt, "Concept of History," 69-75.

Arendt argues that Hegel's concept of history does not allow for the adequate recognition of the disclosive power of singular events, speeches, or traditions. The significance of processes gains at the price of the disclosive power of the singular event. Contrarily, pre-Socratic Greek and, later, Roman thought saw the truth of each event disclosed by itself, requiring only the words of spectators to help uncover it. In a lecture on Marx, Arendt states: "Again the point is that Truth is never contained in a single statement but only in a movement."[52] In "Tradition and the Modern Age," Arendt suggests that Hegel posits historical continuity as the first substitution for the authority of specific traditions, which he repudiates by reducing them to conflicting moments within the dialectically progressive development.[53] In a lecture on action and thought after the French Revolution, Arendt argues:

> In Hegel's history, in the gigantic stream which with the beginning of civilized mankind began to unfold in one superhuman development the absolute truth of the Spirit and ended with it, that is ended with philosophy, the sharp contours of events and the great deeds of men had been equally dissolved.[54]

The incarnation of the divine in human thought and action is not through a particular event, but through a process: "The whole process is the unfolding of the divine, of the Spirit, of what goes on in man's heads."[55]

I have argued in previous chapters that Arendt uses the image of the *daimon* to explain the relation between the divine, the *who* revealed in action, and the thinking two-in-one of conscience. I have proposed a reading of Arendt by which particular acts, as well as particular instances of situated judgments, reveal dimensions of *who* the actor and spectator uniquely are, and that these moments reveal the actor's or the spectator's connection to the divine, thus making the public sphere a spiritual realm in which individuals appear as more than constative entities. Arendt's *who* is unique, as distinct from the universal *what*. Thus, conceiving the disclosure of the divine element in man as a historical process of incarnation, one that relates to the singular actors and spectators as accidental means to the universal process, serves to relegate particular disclosures of the divine to oblivion.

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[52] Arendt, "Marx, Karl," image 2.
[53] Arendt, "Tradition and the Modern Age," 28.
[54] Arendt, "Action and Thought after the French Revolution," image 16.
[55] Arendt, "Marx, Karl," image 1.

"From Hegel to Marx"

Arendt offered her thoughts on Hegel's influence on Marx in 1951 *Denktagebuch* entries and in a 1953 German radio address, "Von Hegel zu Marx," all available now in English translation.[56] We revisit her reading within the context of our examination of Arendt's fragmentary historiography, having more extensively examined Arendt's general critique of Marx in chapter three.

Arendt suggests that while Hegel projects the dialectical historical philosophy onto the past, in order to reconcile with it, Marx projects it onto the future, to set goals for revolutionary action.[57] For Marx, revolutionary politics is action that makes history agree with the dialectical law of change. Contrary to Kant and Hegel, who saw the truth of reason as revealed retrospectively, behind the backs of acting men, Marx sees action as producing truth. This breaks with the tradition's hierarchy of thought and action.[58] Arendt argues that Marx's inversion of thought and action collapses the authority of tradition and its binding truths, as well as the source of religious authority that God is the measure of value. This collapse ushers in historical-perspectival thinking and brings a definitive end to the tradition of Western political thought:

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[56] Arendt, "From Hegel to Marx."
[57] Ibid., 70.

> The end of tradition, it appears, begins with the collapse of the tradition's authority, not with any challenge to its substantial content as such. [...] What was new and extraordinarily effective about Marx's view was the way in which he regarded culture, politics, society, and economics within *one* functional context, which, as it soon turned out, can be arbitrarily shifted from one perspective to another. [...] [E]verything can be explained without ever generating a binding truth anologous to the authority of tradition. [...] It is quite in keeping with such formalization...that Marx could claim that it was from the tradition (which for him had come to its conclusion in Hegel) that he had taken the dialectical method. In other words, what he took from the tradition was an apparently purely formal component to be used in whatever way he chose.[59]

In *On Revolution*, Arendt suggests that Marx's rewriting of history in terms of class struggle fascinated even the skeptics, some of whom were still impressed by his "original intention to find a device by which to force the destinies of those excluded from official history into the memory of posterity."[60] However, in "The Concept of History: Ancient and Modern," Arendt implies that Marx's intention to redeem the past could not be attained because of his positing of an end of history, the last stage of communism or the realm of socialized humanity, whose intended fabrication was the end and meaning of all action. Marx combined the philosophy of history with the teleological political philosophy of the contract theorists, where the end of politics is the establishing of a new, secular, political order. He did this by making the highest ends of history the self-conscious aims of political action. Marx turned the meaning of history into a prescriptive end of action. He tries to make history, as if it were an end of fabrication. Arendt holds that when the meaning of an action, properly identified by a retrospective spectator, is instead pursued by means of direct action, this meaning is lost in a chain of means and ends. The dialectical process of class struggle cannot guarantee immortality or properly disclose *who* its actors are, because the final end turns all singular events, deeds, and sufferings, into means to that end. These means are forgettable in relation to the end.[61]

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[58] Ibid., 76.
[59] Ibid., 72-74.
[60] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 333.

Hegel, Marx, and Totalitarian Logic

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt explains how the logic expounded by totalitarian propaganda and the logic behind totalitarian rule's self-understanding engages the formal logic of dialectical historical progression, if not Hegel or Marx's own image of a free or non-alienated community. It is in this early work that Arendt most graphically illustrates the dangers posed by totalitarian logic to human plurality and the possibility for individuals to live meaningfully and to die meaningfully.

Totalitarian rule has shown how a powerful regime's mobilization of dialectical historical discourse can endanger truth, meaning, and freedom. Arendt holds that when an event's place in the process of man-made history is all that gives the event meaning, it essentially becomes meaningless, because any end can be posited as that which drives the process. Arendt holds that the formalism of dialectical historicism allows for totalitarian process thinking, a process that begins by establishing the first thesis in the dialectic as a premise from which further distortative or truth-concealing interpretations of actions and events can be logically deduced.[62] Under totalitarian logic, events may be reinterpreted to objectively confirm the prophesized end. Arendt writes that within a totalitarian ideology,

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[61] Arendt, "Concept of History," 77-80.

> The movement of history and the logical process of this notion are supposed to correspond to each other, so that whatever happens, happens according to the logic of one "idea." However, the only possible movement in the realm of logic is the process of deduction from a premise. Dialectical logic, with its process from thesis through antithesis to synthesis which in turn becomes the thesis of the next dialectical movement, is not different in principle, once an ideology gets hold of it; the first thesis becomes the premise and its advantage for ideological explanation is that this dialectical device can explain away factual contradictions as stages of one identical, consistent movement.[63]

In totalitarian movements, leaders and their followers merely execute historical or natural laws of motion, with an image of the singular *who* as a *what*, as a mere accident of the process, either a useful means, or an objective obstacle that must be eliminated, according to the general law. In this way, totalitarian rule engages tactics of terror as "the execution of a law of movement whose ultimate goal is not the welfare of men or the interest of one man but the fabrication of mankind, [one that] eliminates individuals for the sake of the species, sacrifices the 'parts' for the sake of the 'whole.'"[64] Arendt defines ideology as the preparation of the objective executioners and victims of this law to carry out their respective roles.[65] When the movement of the laws of nature or history are deemed to be never-ending, or to envision an end centuries in the future, new victims must continually be fabricated to fit the law:

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[62] Arendt, "From Hegel to Marx," 74.
[63] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 469.
[64] Ibid., 465.
[65] Ibid., 468.

> If it is the law of nature to eliminate everything that is harmful and unfit to live, it would mean the end of nature itself if new categories of the harmful and unfit-to-live could not be found; if it is the law of history that in a class struggle certain classes "wither away," it would mean the end of human history itself if rudimentary new classes did not form, so that they in turn could "wither away" under the hands of totalitarian rulers. In other words, the law of killing by which totalitarian movements seize and exercise power would remain a law of the movement even if they ever succeeded in making all of humanity subject to their rule.[66]

The notion of objective victims necessary according to natural of historical laws brings anonymity to death and suffering. One of Arendt's most important moral notions adopted from Heidegger's existentialism is that man's dignity is redeemed in his possibility to die a meaningful death, to act beyond death. To leave a meaningful story behind for spectators requires a theatre of human solidarity. One can only act on a principle if the hope that one's story may be redeemed in the future is not entirely blackened out by feelings of futility, isolation, and loneliness. As Arendt relates, the camps destroyed the moral person in man by making martyrdom impossible. Arendt quotes David Rousset:

> How many people here still believe that a protest has even historic importance? This skepticism is the real masterpiece of the SS. Their great accomplishment. They have corrupted all human solidarity. Here the night has fallen on the future. When no witnesses are left, there can be no testimony. To demonstrate when death can no longer be postponed is an attempt to give death a meaning, to act beyond one's own death. In order to be successful, a gesture must have social meaning. There are hundreds of thousands of us here, all living in absolute solitude. That is why we are subdued no matter what happens.[67]

Under totalitarian rule, organized oblivion forbids both grief and remembrance. Arendt writes:

> It is only because Achilles set out for Hector's funeral, only because the most despotic governments honored the slain enemy, only because the Romans allowed the Christians to write their martyrologies, only because the Church kept its heretics alive in the memory of men, that all was not lost and never

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[66] Ibid., 464.

[67] Ibid., 451. See Rousset, *The Other Kingdom*, 464.

> could be lost. The concentration camps, by making death itself anonymous...robbed death of its meaning as the end of a fulfilled life.[68]

Another danger with a dialectical view of historical progression is that actions that cause human suffering, actions that can be judged from a disinterested spectator as unfit to the dignity of mankind, can, according to the dialectical logic, be judged as the necessary negative moment that will bear the fruit of freedom, or whatever positive end is posited by the logicians. In the 1972 conference in Toronto, Arendt said:

> [Marx] was surrounded by the most hideous consequences of his system and nevertheless thought that this was a great business. He was, of course, also Hegelian and believed in the power of the negative. Well I *don't* believe in the power of the negative, of the negation, if it is the terrible misfortune of other people.[69]

One of the main theses of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is that the experience of the death camps forever discredited the notion of the negative moment bearing the sacrificial fruit of the future positive moment. This experience, according to Arendt, brought a new "fearful imagination" whose only advantage was

> to dissolve the sophistic-dialectical interpretations of politics which are all based on the superstition that something good might result from evil. Such dialectical acrobatics had at least a semblance of justification so long as the worst that man could inflict upon man was murder. But, as we know today, murder is only a limited evil. The murderer who kills a man [...] destroys a life, but he does not destroy the fact of existence itself.[70]

Arendt's study of totalitarianism and a generation's experience of war, thus provides a new standard for political judgment:

> Instead of producing a pacifism devoid of reality, the insight into the structure of modern wars, guided and mobilized by fear, might have led to the realization that the only standard for a necessary war is the fight against conditions under

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[68] Ibid., 452.

[69] "The Work of Hannah Arendt," 335.

[70] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 442.

> which people no longer wish to live – and our experiences with the tormenting hell of the totalitarian camps have enlightened us only too well about the possibility of such conditions. Thus the fear of concentration camps and the resulting insight into the nature of total domination might serve to invalidate all obsolete political differentiations from right to left and to introduce beside and above them the politically most important yardstick for judging events in our time, namely: whether they serve totalitarian domination or not.[71]

Arendt suggests that political responsibility requires that one recognize the possibility of irrational acts that bear no fruit in a 'necessary' development of freedom. The conditions of a world fit to live in must be chosen and rebuilt with every generation, but does not occur behind men's backs. One's commitment to act or to judge in a manner inspired by the principles of plurality, but also with a critical knowledge of the past, requires not a spiritual reconciliation to this past as the best and most rational of possible outcomes – a dangerous fallacy of the spectator's contemplative standpoint – but rather an understanding that one is constantly responsible for the way the world looks and that this world is evanescent, that it can quickly become uninhabitable, if one's responsibility toward it is lost sight of. This is an underlying ethic of Arendt's critique of the philosophy of history.

Fragmentary Historiography: Time Concepts of Kafka and Benjamin

Arendt prefaces her studies of *Between Past and Future* by professing the intent of her critical interpretations of the past:

> [To] discover the real origins of traditional concepts in order to distill from them anew their original spirit which has so sadly evaporated from the very key words of political language – such as freedom and justice, authority and reason, responsibility and virtue, power and glory – leaving behind empty shells with

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[71] Ibid.

> which to settle almost all accounts, regardless of their underlying phenomenal reality.[72]

Arendt's form of historiography assumes a particular understanding of how the actor and the spectator are situated in time. She engages a rectilinear concept of time, for, as Arendt suggests in *On Revolution*, newness and uniqueness are only conceivable by rectilinear time, not by cyclical or sempiternal repetitions.[73] As Villa suggests, in comparison to Hegel, Arendt more radically intensifies the sense of a gap between past and future and denies the comfort of entering into an appropriating dialogue with the past. She takes the gap or rupture in authoritative tradition as the starting condition for contemporary thought, so that remembrance can only occur by a leap, or a retrieval in fragments.[74]

Edi Pucci notes that while Hegel's speculative binding of the past to the present is a form of violence that abolishes the restriction of the past's appearance in the present as a mere trace, he asks whether Arendt's form of fragmentary narrative might avoid such violence.[75] Pucci, via Ricoeur, reminds us that Arendt favors the aesthetic form of judgment of historical events, based on their exemplary validity, over teleological judgment, which, according to Kant's theory of judgment, grounds judgment on the purposiveness of nature. Pucci and Ricoeur argue that grounding judgment on teleology, positing the notion of progress as the teleological idea by which we judge events, would relapse to a Hegelian, speculative philosophy of history.[76] Pucci asks some important questions about Arendt's fragmentary approach. How does the spectator avoid falling into moral relativism while avoiding a totalizing vision of history? Historical narration is, after all, a moral concern insofar as it selects what merits remembrance and transmission for subsequent generations. However, when the spectator reflectively relates a past event to the present, a form of judgment, he is implicitly invited to compare this judgment with the judgment of the universal historian in which the past is meaningful within the grand narrative. Thus the fragmentary has a limit. Also, there remains in fragmentary narrative a certain violence toward the past, in service to identity, in service to bestowing sense upon the present.[77] Can we judge or write history, can we identify the *who* of an actor, without recourse to teleology?

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[72] Arendt, "Preface," in *Between Past and Future*, 15.
[73] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 27.
[74] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 10.
[75] Pucci, "History and the Question of Identity," 126.
[76] Ibid., 127-28.

Arendt begins the explanation of her time concept by citing a parable by Kafka, a mental phenomenon or thought-event:

> He has two antagonists: the first presses him from behind, from the origin. The second blocks the road ahead. He gives battle to both. To be sure, the first supports him in his fight with the second, for he wants to push him forward, and in the same way the second supports him in his fight with the first, since he drives him back. But it is only theoretically so. For it is not only the two antagonists who are there, but he himself as well, and who really knows his intentions? His dream, though, is that some time in an unguarded moment – and this would require a night darker than any night has ever been yet – he will jump out of the fighting line and be promoted, on account of his experience in fighting, to the position of umpire over his antagonists in their fight with each other.[78]

Kafka retains the image of rectilinear temporal movement. "He" dreams of a place outside the "fighting line," the "timeless, spaceless, suprasensuous realm" of thought.[79] Arendt suggests that there are intervals in history when living actors and spectators become aware that their own time is determined both by the past and by the future. These "odd in-between" periods have often shown themselves to "contain the moment of truth."[80] This gap, the place of thought between past and future, used to be covered over by the authority of tradition. In modernity, the thread of tradition was broken, and this gap became a reality of political relevance. In Kafka's thought-event, the past and future clash, but "he" must also stand his ground against both:

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[77] Ibid., 131-32.

[78] Arendt, "Preface," *Between Past and Future*, 7.

[79] Ibid., 11.

> Seen from the viewpoint of man, who always lives in the interval between past and future, time is not a continuum, a flow of uninterrupted succession; it is broken in the middle, at the point where "he" stands; and "his" standpoint is not the present as we usually understand it but rather a gap in time which "his" constant fighting, "his" making a stand against past and future, keeps in existence.[81]

It is notable that the past is here described not as a burden that "he" must shoulder or be rid of in his "march into the future."[82] It is a force that reaches back to an origin and then "presses forward."[83] Contrarily, it is the future that "drives us back into the past."[84] Arendt relates that Kafka's fight occurs once action has run its course, but while the spectator questions its meaning, so that the action's outcome has yet to be completed.

Arendt alters Kafka's image. She holds that man's insertion into rectilinear time causes both forces to deflect from their original direction. This results in a third, diagonal force, whose direction is determined by both past and future. Iseult Honohan suggests that it is the historian's function to record privileged moments and actions that, although perhaps objective failures, bear significance for the present because they represent alternative possibilities.[85] This is how the plain of the line from past to future can be deflected by the present, how the spectator may emerge as a sort of actor that alters the direction of the future. While the force of past and future are infinite as to their origins, the third force has a definite origin, being where past and future meet. However, its ending is infinite, since it is the result of two forces whose origin is infinite. This third force is the activity of thought. It is the position from which man judges the fighting forces of past and future:

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[80] Ibid., 9.
[81] Ibid., 11.
[82] Ibid., 10.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid., 11.
[85] Honohan, "Arendt and Benjamin on the Promises of History," 316.

> It may well be the region of the spirit or, rather, the path paved by thinking, this small track of non-time which the activity of thought beats within the time-space of mortal men and into which the trains of thought, of remembrance and anticipation, save whatever they touch from the ruin of historical and biographical time.[86]

By situating action, thought, and judgment within a gap between past and future, Arendt frees these faculties from the determinism of dialectical historicism. The spectator's judgment may thus be impartial, freed from Marx's notion that all judgment is determined by the judge's situation within the shifting social relations of production. The actor can likewise project himself upon the future, free from the fatalism of history's necessary movements and counter-movements.

Honohan writes that both Benjamin and Arendt are monumental historians, in the sense of Nietzsche's definition, as historians who seek edifying examples from the past. But they are reflective rather than dogmatic, in that they search for new human possibilities rather than traditional canons.[87] For both Benjamin and Arendt, discontinuity is a feature of history, where meaning is disclosed in exceptional moments that disrupt processes of inertia or forces of constraint. Historical processes are continually started up and interrupted by individual actions that are contingent, since they could have been otherwise. For both writers, narrative reveals the intelligibility of these moments and allows for their repeated reinterpretation.[88] We can see Benjamin's enthusiasm for the wide amplitude of potential interpretation opened up by a well-told story in his reading of Leskov.[89] Honohan suggests that Arendt's historical understanding does not mean resignation to the past or justification of it, but rather mastering the past to carry on living.[90]

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[86] Arendt, "Preface," *Between Past and Future*, 13.
[87] Honohan, 324.

Arendt, however, rejects the notion that the past can ever be mastered. The actor or spectator can, rather, reconcile themselves to the truth of past events, something Arendt sees as a form of catharsis that removes obstacles to future action. In some ways, one's courageous reconciliation to moments of the past that one might prefer to leave comfortably concealed serves to disclose relations within the present that situate potential future action. The context of *praxis* becomes illuminated by unearthing elements of the past that traditional historical discourses, or the stories of the victors, have hitherto concealed.

Since historiography is a kind of salvation from oblivion, Benhabib asks how one writes about events that one would rather destroy or forget, when this act of preservation seems to justify it. Arendt finds the solution in Benjamin's fragmentary historiography that provides an account of failures, dead ends, ruptures, and failed hopes. This preserves the memory of the suffering and the dead, frees the imagination from historical necessity.[91] It also overcomes the notion that what is recounted is thereby rationally justified by the account. Narration must account for appearances of the irrational.

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[88] Ibid., 312-14, 318.
[89] See Benjamin, "The Storyteller."
[90] Honohan, 324.
[91] Benhabib, 87-88.

The influence that Benjamin was to have on Arendt's own historiography is most vivid in Arendt's article, "Walter Benjamin: 1892-1940," which appeared in 1968, both in *Men in Dark Times* and as Arendt's editorial introduction to Benjamin's *Illuminations*. Arendt's explanation of Benjamin's fragmentary approach to history, one undertaken in the face of the loss of tradition's authority, can be read as an account of her own approach to the past:

> Insofar as the past has been transmitted as tradition, it possesses authority; insofar as authority presents itself historically, it becomes tradition. Walter Benjamin knew that the break in tradition and the loss of authority which occurred in his lifetime, were irreparable, and he concluded that he had to discover new ways of dealing with the past. In this he became a master when he discovered that the transmissibility of the past had been replaced by its citability and that in place of its authority there had arisen a strange power to settle down, piecemeal, in the present and to deprive it of "peace of mind," the mindless peace of complacency.[92]

Arendt's own fragmentary historiography bears an equivocal relation to tradition. Arendt certainly emphasizes the importance of specific political traditions for the intelligibility of action and judgment over time. In the preface to *Between Past and Future*, Arendt writes that without tradition, "which selects and names, which hands down and preserves," there is no continuity in time, no past or future, but only sempiternal change.[93] Remembrance is helpless without a pre-established framework of reference, a framework we can liken to Arendt's valid examples, a historicized transformation of Kant's schemata. With the break in tradition encouraged by Marx's inversion of thought and action, then decisively ruptured by the totalitarian experience, we are unable to ask "adequate, meaningful questions."[94] Having no testament to precede action, to show the actor "what will rightfully be his," or to be left behind by action, constitutes a failure of memory.[95]

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[92] Arendt, "Walter Benjamin: 1892-1940," in *Men in Dark Times*, 193.
[93] Arendt, "Preface," in *Between Past and Future*, 5.

In "Tradition and the Modern Age," Arendt argues that the tradition could bring everything into harmony if its beginning was properly remembered. Arendt likens the beginning of a tradition to a forceful and beautiful fundamental musical chord that brings all sympathetic notes into harmony at first. However, it finally becomes discordant, loses its power of reconciliation, after some time. The tradition becomes destructive when its concepts are distorted, or its categories become tyrannical. A tradition's concepts become more tyrannical as it loses its living, persuasive force and as the memory of its beginning recedes. The distortion of tradition also occurs when new phenomena are experienced but attempts are made to resolve it into old conceptual categories.[96] Even a vital, authoritative tradition must adapt to new phenomena. Arendt writes in *On Revolution* that new words or the rejuvenation of old words are needed when new phenomena appear.[97] Benhabib notes that the universal categories of analogical thinking involved in narrative tend to normalize and familiarize what is, in fact, new and unfamiliar. Arendt responds to this dilemma through the critical force of new terminology, adequate to the phenomenon. Arendt thought that language itself should not be without passion and moral resonance, since its lack would condone the object of historical study.[98] If such rejuvenation does not occur, tradition becomes concealment, a form of forgetting, or *lethe*. Villa holds that to read Arendt's project as a remembrance or retrieval of traditional categories is to underestimate her radical rethinking of action. The task is not to recover or restore ancient concepts and traditions, but to deconstruct the reifications of a tradition that has lost its vitality.[99] This deconstruction, according to Arendt, is the task of thinking in Kafka's gap between past and future: "Out of this present when it has been sacrificed for the invocation of the past arises then 'the deadly impact of thought' which is directed against tradition and the authority of the past. Thus the heir and preserver unexpectedly turns into a destroyer."[100]

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[94] Ibid., 9.
[95] Ibid., 5-6.
[96] Arendt, "Tradition and the Modern Age," 18-30.
[97] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 36.

Arendt interprets Benjamin's collection of quotations, his citing of the past, as an exercise in the destruction of the present. The citation of thought fragments torn out of the past also, paradoxically, provides hope that these fragments might survive the rupture or stagnancy of tradition. These fragments interrupt the flow of presentation, the "spell of tradition," and concentrate what is "rich and strange" in them.[101] Arendt argues that Benjamin shared more with Heidegger than with the dialectics of his Marxist friends, due to his task of retrieving past linguistic crystallizations, constellations of language that ossified truths disclosed in the past, but in a manner that disrupts their original context by interpreting them according to new thoughts, situations, and events of the present.

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[98] Benhabib, 90-91.
[99] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 8-9.
[100] Arendt, "Walter Benjamin," 199.
[101] Ibid., 196.

This task is beautifully rendered through the image of the pearl diver, based on Shakespeare's *Tempest*:

> Like a pearl diver who descends to the bottom of the sea, not to excavate the bottom and bring it to light but to pry loose the rich and the strange, the pearls and the coral in the depths and to carry them to the surface, this thinking delves into the depths of the past – but not in order to resuscitate it the way it was and to contribute to the renewal of extinct ages. What guides this thinking is the conviction that although the living is subject to the ruin of the time, the process of decay is at the same time a process of crystallization, that in the depth of the sea, into which sinks and is dissolved what once was alive, some things "suffer a sea-change" and survive in new crystallized forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements, as though they waited only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living – as "thought fragments," as something "rich and strange," and perhaps even as everlasting *Urphänomene.*[102]

Remembrance, for Arendt, is likewise a matter of retrieving the original spirit of concepts, to locate and re-articulate their underlying phenomenal reality or primordial experience whose alien nature explodes the present. In Arendt's case, she looks for the primordial experiences of initiatory action in order to disclose and combat the relations of world alienation and stultification of plurality, in the present. Benhabib suggests that Arendt, on one hand, engages in fragmentary historiography inspired by Benjamin, but on the other hand, she belies an *Ursprungsphilosophie* inspired by Husserl and Heidegger that privileges an origin and continuous history of its decline, seeking to find in it the lost and concealed essence of the present phenomena "according to which memory is the mimetic recollection of the lost origins of phenomena as contained in some fundamental human experience."[103]

In his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin writes that every generation of man is endowed with a weak Messianic power of redeeming the past, a power to which past generations lay claim.[104] Redemption here concerns the naming, or citation, of all moments of the past.[105] We may interpret it as the disclosure of all *who*s, an interpretation that bears scrutiny if read along with Benjamin's analysis of the passion of the collector. The true collector values things not for their usefulness, their role as a means to an end, but for their beauty, intrinsic worth, or genuineness. Tradition authoritatively orders the past according to categories of positive versus negative, orthodox versus heretical, relevant versus irrelevant, useful or useless, while the collector posits the standards of genuineness or pure originality. Arendt writes: "The collector destroys the context in which his object once was only part of a greater, living entity, and since only the uniquely genuine will do for him he must cleanse the chosen object of everything that is typical about it."[106] To recognize a thing's beauty requires Kant's disinterested delight. This recognition, furthermore, is a redemption of the original thing, meant to complement the redemption of singular man.[107] For Benjamin, to quote, which is a form of collection, is also to name, and to name, rather than to speak in sentences, is to disclose truth.[108] Benjamin attempts to understand linguistic crystallizations as "intentionless and noncommunicative utterances of a 'world essence.'"[109] The difference here between a proper name and common sentence echoes that between the disclosure of a unique *who* versus the disclosure of the categorical *what*, whose universality relates to a function or intention recognized by the authority of tradition or one's function in a world-historical narrative told according to natural or economic laws.

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[102] Ibid., 205-06.
[103] Benhabib, 95.

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[104] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," thesis 2, 254.
[105] Ibid., thesis 3, 254.
[106] Arendt, "Walter Benjamin," 199-200.
[107] Ibid., 197.
[108] Ibid., 203.
[109] Ibid., 205.

Benjamin's understanding of the present as a moment pregnant with the possibility of Messianic redemption of the past must be understood in contrast to a concept of homogenous, empty time. He sees homogenous, empty time as central to the writing of universal history and the notion of continual progress. Its method is merely additive, a mass of data and moments with causal connections.[110] According to Honohan, Benjamin critiques historical objectivism for adding up a continuous flow of equivalent events, which is connected to a belief in the inevitable progress of mankind, one that canonizes the status quo.[111] Benjamin argues that a critique of the concept of progress must be based on a critique of the notion of a progression through "homogenous, empty time."[112]

Benjamin saw no consistent, dialectical, rationally progressive process in history. Arendt proposes that Benjamin was no traditional dialectical materialist, but rather recalls Adorno's identification of a static element in Benjamin's work. This static element is reflected in Benjamin's image of the urban *flâneur*, the wanderer who, "through the *gestus* of purposeless strolling, turns his back to the crowd even as he is propelled and swept by it."[113] Benjamin's rejection of a rationally progressive process in history is even more evident in his depiction of the angel of history in the ninth thesis of his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*:

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[110] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," thesis 18, 263.
[111] Honohan, 320.
[112] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," thesis 13, 261.
[113] Arendt, "Walter Benjamin," 165.

> This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.[114]

Honohan notes that Arendt does not agree with Benjamin that history is a process of continual catastrophe, but rather a succession of lost opportunities and incomplete projects.[115] To read history as a process of catastrophe is to deny the power of beginning.

For Benjamin, the moments in the present when such redemption of the past is possible flit by quickly: "The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again. […] For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably."[116] Honohan offers that for both Benjamin and Arendt, storytelling is urgent because the truths of events flit away quickly if not seized on immediately. They are not like scientific truths that can be recalled, repeated. They can disappear with passing time, or be concealed. These events, because they often counter reason, pleasure, profit, and common sense, cannot be predicted, so they must be preserved before they return to oblivion.[117]

Benjamin conceives of the present as the "time of the now" which is shot through with chips of Messianic time."[118] He also calls this present a "state of emergency" and argues that our conception of history must keep with the insight that states of emergency are the rule, not the exception. Benjamin's materialistic historiography is based on a constructive principle. Thinking focuses on configurations pregnant with tensions. These are "monads" in which we may recognize "the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening" or "a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past."[119] Through events may be separated by millennia, the historian "grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one."[120] To the actors of the French Revolution, for example, "ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now" and could be evoked and "exploded" out of the continuum of history, out of homogenous, empty time.[121] When revolutionary actors explode the homogenous time continuum, it establishes a day that becomes a recurring day of remembrance. Thus, the calendars and holidays that they establish are "monuments of historical consciousness."[122] This is the weak Messianic power of the materialist historiographer:

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[114] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," thesis 9, 257-58.
[115] Honohan, 327.
[116] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," thesis 5, 255.
[117] Honohan, 319.
[118] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," thesis 18, 263.

> He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history – blasting a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework. As a result of this method the lifework is preserved in this work and at the same time canceled; in the lifework, the era; and in the era, the entire course of history.[123]

According to Benjamin, to relive an era, one must forget all that has happened since, and with empathy, grasp the historical image as it briefly flares up. One must empathize with the defeated. This is the opposite method of historical materialism, which, according to Benjamin, empathizes with the victors, the rulers. There is even a danger, when the memory of an event flashes up, that it might become a tool of the ruling classes, a force of conformity that threatens to overpower the tradition. The attempt must be made in every era to wrest the tradition away from this force. If this force wins, even the dead lose and there is no hope in the past.[124]

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[119] Ibid., thesis 17, 262.
[120] Ibid., thesis 18, 263.
[121] Ibid, thesis 14, 261.
[122] Ibid., thesis 15, 261-62.
[123] Ibid., thesis 17, 262-63.

How does Arendt's concept of action fit with the notion of messianic power, a notion with strong association to the divine? In a valuable reading, Susannah Young Gottlieb suggests that Arendt endows the natality of action with a weak messianic power that can hope to save the world from the petrification and hopelessness brought on by a conformist adherence to automatic processes, processes that include a notion of history as either constant progress or constant decline. If no such action is viewed as possible, then the world is already at its end. However, Arendt avoids the association of the messianic with any notion of the apocalyptic, the end of history, or a full disclosure of Being. She inverts the traditional teleological understanding of human life by positing the end or purpose of life as beginning, rather than reaching a conclusion. For Arendt, the messianic hope of action is one that can begin the world anew, make it again fit to live in, but not save man's soul.[125] Arendt stresses that action is not the ability to fabricate a totally new, ideal world. This messianic power of the natality of action is weak because it is also human self-exposure, rather than the work of a sovereign being acting through us as mere puppets.

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[124] Ibid., thesis 6 & 7, 255-56.

[125] Gottlieb, 138-41.

Reappearance of the *Daimon*

How do we interpret the *who* and the *daimon* in light of Arendt's fragmentary historiography? Above, it was established that the spectator sits in judgment in a gap between past and future. The spectator's thinking two-in-one deconstructs both the past and the present. His interpretations open new possibilities for the future, new courses of action, and new channels of interpretation. This is the great potential of Kant's aesthetical ideas, like the *daimon*'s condensed signs. Such new possibilities may be found in what universal history judges to be 'failures' of the past. Contrarily, the fragmentary approach hopes to protect and revive such 'failed' exceptional moments for redemptive recognition and for future inspiration. In spatial terms, the line of the future veers at a diagonal vector from the past, because of the deconstructive and potentially process-altering thought in the gap of the present. The spectator emerges as a sort of actor, bringing something new to the world.

In the gap of the present, the spectator sees the actor's *daimon* where the actor cannot. His thought deconstructs the unitary *who* that the actor performs or stylizes for the public. The alterity of this *who* is brought to light by the spectator. This type of vision sees how the act affects other actors on stage, or is a response to the acts of others. It also imagines how other spectators in the theatre might see the actor. Thus, this type of vision sees the dimensions of plurality, the contextualizing world, that the act and actor enter and uncover. The spectator interprets the surplus, transcendent Being, the meanings beyond means and ends, of the initiatory act. The public sphere becomes a spiritual one. Further, the spectator can, albeit always to a limit, imagine what is going on in the internal two-in-one of the actor. While this duality of deliberation is never perfectly available to the actor or to the spectator, the spectator can see how it is performed in the actor's deed. The spectator sees the Socratic *daimon* of deliberative thinking behind the back of the actor.

The image from the *Tempest* shows us that the living is subject to the ruin of time. Acts, discourses, the appearances of the thinking two-in-one of living human beings, are both preserved and concealed by tradition. Tradition reifies what was once living action and thinking. The inspiring spirit or genius of past actors, their *daimon* that can never perfectly be conceptually captured, is nonetheless imperfectly reified by the spectators of the day. To recall the myth of Er, the *daimon* accompanies the actor as he drinks from the river *Lethe*, which both preserves and conceals. These exemplary deeds, once crystallized in the tradition they inspire, suffer a sea change. In this age, the authority of tradition is broken. But, fragments may still be retrieved, uncovered, disclosed. The life of new deeds can be breathed into them, as these exemplary fragments inspire the present. This is the role of the spectator insofar as he deconstructs the past. The present spectator may imagine what the original *daimon* looked like, how the living deeds of the exemplary actors looked to the spectators of their own age. "What was Socrates thinking?" "How did he appear at the trial?" The fragments that we cite when we now speak – the examples that we carry to the surface when we render judgment on the political events that we respond to today – disclose *who* we are. Today, our judgments and deeds cannot be subsumed under a tradition without authority, accepted uncritically, but we can perform anew the principles of action and the publicized thoughts that these traditions protected and transmitted to us. Like the *daimon*, these cited fragments appear behind our backs, whispers from the actors and spectators of the past.

Conclusion

I have argued that Arendt's notion of performative disclosure posits the individuated actor not as a sovereign and self-transparent subject whose action expresses an authentic personal essence through work on natural material or within social relations, but rather as a decentered *who* whose action, in plurality with others, reveals meaningful dimensions of the shared world and of the agent's unique situation in history. With this thesis, I hope to have invited further research as to how the disclosure of the *who*, as opposed to the *what*, disturbs reified public identities and challenges us to question what conditions decenter actors in the processes and events of their own identity disclosures, what the nature of the relation is between the performance of a public *persona*, one's personal self-understanding or intention, and the subsequent judgment and narrative accounts of public spectators. That no actor can stand in a position of authorship with respect to his story challenges the very notion of freedom understood as sovereignty or mastery, as well as political projects that attempt to realize history.

I have also traced the appearances of the *daimon* in Arendt's published work, lecture notes, and in the work of some of her most important theoretical influences – including Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Jaspers, Heidegger, and Kant – to problematize the distinction usually read in Arendt between the political space of appearance and a separate transcendent or divine realm. I have suggested that action is a form of connection to the divine, not only by calling for spectator narratives that immortalize the actor, but also by engaging the actor as a discloser of transcendent meanings and new political possibilities. The public realm is depicted by Arendt as a spiritual realm where the transcendent meanings of worldly phenomena may be disclosed, in excess of appearances, but in a way that requires the symbolic order of *doxa*, in an active and continual interpretive expansion of spectator judgments. Such judgments require the activity of thought, which reckons with concepts that emerge, uncannily, from a place both within and without the human mind, a place of seemingly divine origin. Interpreted along with the Socratic dialogues, the *daimon* shows that moral deliberation of the two-in-one is closely bound up with public disclosure of the *who.* This problematizes the hard distinction usually read in Arendt between what the actor makes appear through action, and what the actor thinks or intends, prior to action. The *daimon* also implies that action performs the *who* while preserving an uncanny alterity, both within and outside of the actor. The two-in-one of conscience is this internal alterity, one that anticipates and represents to itself the second order of alterity, the plurality of worldly spectators. The anticipated spectator is, indeed, immanent to the deliberation of the two-in-one of thinking prior to action, while an audience of spectators is required for the deliberation of the two-in-one to appear as the *valid personality*. We remember that Kant describes the *daimon* as the spirit that inspires the actor, but whose wings must be clipped in order to be made intelligible to spectators. We may thus abandon any hypostatized distinction between the existential positions of actor and spectator. This point is reinforced if we remember that to publically and discursively render one's judgment as a response to an event is to engage in a form of performative action, one that can bring change to the world by offering new interpretations that call for subsequent reactions by new actors and spectators.

Finally, I hope to have shed some light, via Arendt, on the modern dilemma of the ultimate metaphysical groundlessness of action and judgment, as well as the personal responsibility that this dilemma calls us to bear. As Arendt has shown, meaningful political practice must now be pursued without its grounding in metaphysical and rational absolutes, without its being legitimated through the unity of authority, tradition, and religion. Political commitments must be bravely affirmed without the guarantee of success or adequate recognition, the reward of felicity of the actor's soul, or any sign of approbation from beyond. This notion is exemplified in the *daimon* which, although representing a divine element or order, whispers no content for the actor's course of action. The *daimon* resides within the conscience of actors and in the alterity of spectators the actor internalizes. The judging of meanings of speeches and of acts, and the assigning of responsibility to actors, are tasks undertaken by spectators working under similar conditions of uncertainty. The world of intelligibility is built up and cared for discursively and perspectivally, by finite beings situated in a given place and in time made only partly manageable through accounts of history that we struggle and agonize over. Maintaining an open theatre for this perpetual doxatic struggle over the meanings of contemporary acts and the histories that contextualize them is fundamental to healthy democratic practice.

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